

Scotland's Rural College

Attitudes to land reform

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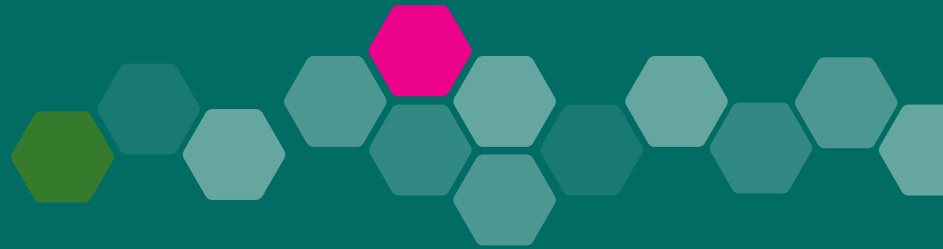
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Attitudes to Land Reform



AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND MARINE

Attitudes to Land Reform

Rachel Warren, Catriona Millar, Maggie Pollok and Lorraine Murray, Ipsos MORI Scotland, and Jayne Glass, Rob McMorran, Marcus Craigie and Carly Maynard, Scotland's Rural College

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Executive summary

Background and methods

This report presents the main findings from a research study exploring the public's attitudes to land reform. The study was conducted on behalf of the Scottish Government by Ipsos MORI Scotland in collaboration with Scotland's Rural College (SRUC). Fieldwork took place between Spring and Autumn 2020.

The aim of this research was to investigate the public's attitudes to land reform and community engagement in decisions about land use and provide a nuanced understanding of what policy options are likely to meet the public's priorities.

A mixed-method approach was adopted, comprising: an evidence review, eight interviews with expert stakeholders, a mixed mode (online and telephone) survey of 1,501 respondents aged 16 and over, and a deliberative stage which involved 10 online workshops and 12 interviews.

Prior perceptions about the benefits of Scotland's land and current challenges

When thinking about 'land in Scotland', participants tended to think first about rural land that has not been built on. Nevertheless, awareness of many current challenges was evident, and the following issues were raised unprompted: concentrated land ownership, absentee landlords, housing developments encroaching on the green belt, derelict land, land banking¹ and disputes over access rights.

In the survey, broadly similar numbers of people viewed each of the following as the biggest challenge for the future of Scotland's land: climate change; building on greenspace; inequality in land ownership; and housing shortages.

Awareness and initial reactions to the Scottish Government's land reform agenda

There were mixed levels of prior awareness of the term 'land reform' and what it might involve – but it was generally viewed positively.

When asked more specifically about awareness of the Scottish Government's plans for land reform, awareness was low: 73% of survey respondents said they knew 'not very much' or 'nothing at all' about it. It was thought that 'land reform' was not a particularly good term to describe this policy area. It was seen as vague and unclear but there was no consensus on a better term.

¹ Where developers or investors purchase land and then sit on it, without developing it, in the hope of making a greater profit in the future when the value of the land has increased.

When presented with an overview of the Scottish Government's aims for land reform and the main elements of the 2003 and 2016 Land Reform (Scotland) Acts, participants were, overall, very supportive of the aims.

Diversification of land ownership

Most people said they supported the Scottish Government's plans to diversify land ownership. In the deliberative discussions, there was general support for a greater number of landowners (though less importance was placed on widening the types of owners). However, others felt it mattered less who owned the land, and more how they treated it.

Survey respondents were more aware of Scottish Government policy supporting communities to buy land and buildings than they were of its plans for land reform more generally.

There were a range of views on the Community Right to Buy (CRtB). Those who were supportive tended to think that those who lived in an area were best placed to determine the way the land is used and would be more likely to have the economic and social wellbeing of the local community at heart.

There was a feeling that urban examples, where communities bought existing buildings or relatively small amounts of unused land, benefitted a greater number of people, for a much lower cost, than rural examples of relatively large land purchases where populations were smaller.

A concern was expressed that communities might lack the necessary skills and resources to take over and run the assets.

Vacant and Derelict Land

A considerable number of respondents (44%) are concerned about vacant or derelict land in their own area. Even among those who had little vacant or derelict land near them, there were concerns about the detrimental effect on wellbeing for those who did.

There was a concern that it can be in the interests of landowners to keep land derelict and there was support for tighter regulations to limit this.

There was low awareness of the Scottish Government's aim to reduce the amount of vacant and derelict land and to give local communities the chance to take control of the land.

Statutory Access Rights

56% of survey respondents indicated they were confident about their rights to access different types of land on foot or bicycle. However, the deliberative research suggests that some of those who may not be 'confident' about their rights have a good idea about the main principles of responsible access.

There was strong support for current access rights once explained. Concerns were expressed, however, about people dropping litter, lighting fires irresponsibly, dog fouling and disturbing animals (and a view that these negative effects were exacerbated as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which has increased amount of people visiting rural land).

Overall, respondents support current access rights but think there should be more education and clarity around the respective responsibilities of the public and landowners – and what to do in the event of a dispute

Views on climate change and protecting wildlife

When asked specifically about how important it is to consider the protection of wildlife and climate change when making decisions about land use, there were high levels of concern about both (96% thought protecting wildlife should be an important factor and 89% thought climate change should be an important factor).

However, this level of concern was not so apparent in the deliberative research. This may be because they are seen as global, rather than local, concerns. This suggests that, in engaging people about land use decisions in their area, people may need to be prompted to consider these aspects.

Engagement in decision-making

Only 13% of survey respondents indicated that they had previously been involved in decision making around land use. Those in the most deprived areas were half as likely as others to have been involved – though they were just as interested in being involved in the future.

There was enthusiastic support in principle for the Scottish Government's aim of promoting greater community involvement in decision making around land use. A lack of awareness of how to get involved – as opposed to a lack of motivation – was the dominant explanation given by participants for not having been involved.

Around two thirds indicated they would be interested in being more involved in the future. It was agreed that there needed to be a multi-pronged approach to the engagement activities including online methods, meetings, and 'knocking on doors'.

Conclusions and implications

There is low awareness of the Scottish Government's land reform agenda as a whole (though slightly more awareness of some specific aspects such as CRtB and access rights). However, once explained to participants, there is considerable support for the overall aims and for specific policies on diversification of land ownership, vacant and derelict land, access rights and community involvement in decision-making. Concerns tended to relate to elements of implementation rather than the policies themselves. These included:

- a view that, while current access rights probably strike the right balance, more should be done to educate the public about their responsibilities,

there should be more clarity about landowners' responsibilities in respect of allowing access, and there should be guidance on what to do in the event of a dispute

- a concern that communities may lack the resources and expertise to manage assets, and may be susceptible to volunteer fatigue in the longer term and therefore that support should be provided
- a concern about the relative cost-benefits of large-scale buyouts (including as land values rise). This was related by some directly to value for money in terms of the number of people likely to benefit. It also highlights the issue of rising land values as a future challenge not just in economic but also social terms

There is an evident appetite among the participants for greater involvement in decisions about land use. Initiatives to encourage this should tap into the pride that is felt in Scotland's land, but also the concerns about vacant and derelict land, about the lack of community facilities and about land not being used to benefit local communities.

The term 'land reform' is perceived as somewhat unclear and is associated with undeveloped, rural land. It is not connected with tangible issues and initiatives that affect people. This has implications for how land reform is positioned. A greater emphasis on the urban elements and buildings in rural towns and villages, may help engage more of the public and help them see the relevance of land reform to their own lives. Examples of successful community buy-outs (particularly urban examples) and repurposing of vacant and derelict land should be publicised.

Early involvement in decisions about how land should be used should also be encouraged. Additionally, decision makers need to consider how the structures and processes involved in making decisions about land use may act as barriers to meaningful community engagement. The findings demonstrate that, although people in the most deprived areas are less likely to have been involved in decisions, they show a similar level of interest in being involved in the future. They are also more likely to be affected by vacant and derelict land in their area. This suggests a need to prioritise and support engagement activities in these areas.

1. Introduction

The Scottish Government aims to improve “Scotland's system of land ownership, use, rights and responsibilities, so that our land may contribute to a fair and just society while balancing public and private interests”².

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 provide substantial new powers for local communities. This includes the extension of community right-to-buy (CRtB) into urban areas, the introduction of a new CRtB for abandoned, neglected and detrimental land and an additional CRtB to further sustainable development. The 2016 Act created the Scottish Land Commission, and the Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement was published in 2017 as a requirement of the Act.

Building on existing legislation, these measures provide a range of opportunities for communities across Scotland to take ownership of land and land assets, as well as providing a strong conceptual framework for land reform aspirations. However, since the legislation of 2015 and 2016 there has been no in-depth research on what the public's understanding of land reform is. This meant a significant evidence gap existed around how much public awareness there is of land reform generally, particularly beyond those communities who have obvious or deep-seated ties to the land.

To inform priorities for the Scottish Land Commission in the run up to the five-year evaluation of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act, the Scottish Government commissioned research to investigate the public's understanding, attitudes and priorities for land reform. The research was undertaken by Ipsos MORI Scotland and Scotland's Rural College (SRUC). This report sets out the findings.

The remainder of this section provides some background on land reform and policy developments in recent years. The next section outlines the aims of the research and the methods used. Section 3 places the findings in context by setting out the public's prior views on the perceived benefits of Scotland's land and the biggest challenges for the future. Sections 4 to 9 discuss the findings on specific aspects of land reform. Conclusions and recommendations are provided in Section 10.

Land reform in Scotland – background and policy context

It is widely accepted that Scotland has the most concentrated pattern of private land ownership in Europe (see, for example, Lorimer, 2000; Wightman, 2013)

² <https://www.gov.scot/policies/land-reform/>

because of several historic factors, such as feudalism, succession laws, fiscal policies and agricultural support (Thomson et al., 2016).

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 introduced measures aimed at making greater diversity in ownership possible, through the establishment of a community and a crofting 'right to buy' and the establishment of responsible access rights (see Box 1).

Box 1 The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 contains three main legislative measures:

1. statutory non-motorised rights of responsible access over most land (and inland water) for all (Part 1)
2. a community (pre-emptive) '*right to buy*' which gave eligible community bodies the right to register an interest in rural (settlements of less than 10,000 people) land and the opportunity to buy that land when it comes up for sale (Part 2)
3. the crofting community (absolute) right to buy, whereby bodies representing crofting communities may register an interest in land and purchase that land (regardless of whether the owner wishes to sell) subject to the approval of their application by Scottish Ministers (Part 3)

Uptake of the CRtB measures and conversion of initial applications into full community land/asset acquisitions has been limited. By the end of 2018 there were 236 registrations of interest recorded on the Register of Community Interests in Land³ from 120 distinct groups - just twenty four of which have been activated (resulting in communities successfully acquiring the land/asset of interest using the full extent of the legislative process), with the remainder either deleted or remaining on the register as active registrations. It should be noted, however, that some of the deleted registrations relate to community groups which have successfully acquired land/other assets, but did so without using the full extent of the Act's legislative measures. The rate of community registrations slowed from 2008 onwards - the first 100 registrations took just over four years and the second 100 nearly eight years – although the number of applications has increased since 2015. This is, perhaps, influenced by increased funding availability and greater public awareness of land reform generally.

³ Since the end of 2018 there have been a further 11 registrations on the [RCIL](#) and a further three registrations on the [Register of Applications by Community Bodies to Buy Land](#), which is the mechanism for applications by community bodies to buy abandoned, neglected or detrimental land and to buy land to further sustainable development.

The Crofting Community Right to Buy (Part 3 of 2003 Act), which provided crofting communities with an absolute right to purchase land and other assets (that is, a potentially forced sale), fundamentally shifted the balance of power between crofting communities and landowners (Macleod et al., 2010). However, uptake has been limited, with only two crofting communities having submitted applications.

Despite this relatively low uptake of the CRtB measures, the 2003 Act is recognised as having had additional indirect effects, motivating buyouts which occurred through negotiation (as opposed to legislative routes) and instigating a power shift away from private landowners towards communities (Macleod et al., 2010; McKee and Warren, 2011).

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 sets out a range of measures designed to help community bodies through the ownership or control of land and buildings (Asset Transfer), and by ensuring their voices are heard in decisions about public services⁴. Part 4 of the 2015 Act contained a series of specific amendments to the community right to buy (established under the Land Reform Act 2003), intended to improve and simplify the process.

The Scottish Parliament passed the Land Reform (Scotland) Act in 2016. The Act represented a substantial step in the development of land reform in Scotland and the culmination of decades of debate and inquiry. The 2016 Act includes a range of measures designed to respond to the recommendations of the Land Reform Review Group from 2014⁵ (see Box 2).

Box 2 The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 incorporates a range of inter-related provisions with the aim of progressing land reform and prompting change in how Scotland's land is owned and managed. Specific provisions under the Act include:

- A requirement for development of a Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement⁶ (Part 1). Subsequently published in 2017, this aims to support the development of a strong relationship between the land and people of Scotland, where rights and responsibilities in relation to land are fully recognised and fulfilled.

⁴ See: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/community-empowerment-scotland-act-summary/>

⁵ The Land Reform Review Group's report published in 2014: [The land of Scotland and the common good: report - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/land-reform-review-report-2014/)

⁶ A Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement was published by Scottish Government in September 2017: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-land-rights-responsibilities-statement/>

- Establishment of the Scottish Land Commission (Part 2) (subsequently established in 2017) with a remit to review the effectiveness of laws and policies relating to land (including future options for land reform), and to make recommendations to Scottish Ministers.
- New powers for Scottish Ministers to provide for the disclosure and publication of information about controlling interests of land owners and tenants across Scotland and the establishment of a public Register of Controlling Interests in land (Part 3). In addition to this, but not directly related to the provisions of the 2016 Act, Registers of Scotland launched ScotLIS (Scotland's Land Information Service) in 2017 – a new map-based, online land information service on land ownership, with Registers of Scotland set to complete the Land Register by 2024.
- Development of Guidance on Engaging Communities in Decisions relating to Land (Part 4). Published in 2018, this expects land owners and those with control over land to engage constructively with communities in rural and urban Scotland.
- A new Right to Buy to Further Sustainable Development (Part 5) which follows the new Right to Buy Abandoned, Neglected and Detrimental Land (see Box 3 below).
- A range of additional measures relating to sporting land management, access and agricultural holdings including: entry into the valuation roll of shooting and deer stalking (Part 6); changes in use of 'common good' land (Part 7); specific measures relating to deer management (Part 8); access rights measures (Part 9); and a range of measures relating to agricultural holdings (Part 10); and small landholdings (Part 11).

Box 3 Summary points from land reform expert interviews

Between March and May 2020, eight in-depth interviews were carried out with a range of land reform experts. The aims of these interviews were to inform the evidence review (Annex 1) and the development of the main questionnaire for this study. A full summary of these interviews is presented in Annex 1, with the main themes summarised below:

Public awareness of land reform policy

- The Scottish public were perceived as having limited awareness of the effects of land reform, with the majority not directly involved in land reform debates. Interviewees noted that while the public may often perceive land reform as not affecting them, they may be more interested in, and affected by, issues relating to land reform than they realise.
- Interviewees were in broad agreement that the public perceive land reform favourably for different reasons, with the caveat that this is the case for those who are aware of and have some understanding of the topic. Additionally, interviewees noted that once people are aware of the issues related to land reform, they often perceive some form of change as being required.
- Interviewees agreed that public awareness of land reform should be increased, including in relation to awareness of the role of land and the current and potential effects of land reform on society. This was perceived as requiring a range of methods to open up the debate beyond those who already have vested interests in land reform, including social media, infographics, short films and case studies.
- Several interviewees agreed that public awareness of land reform is increasing, noting that “land reform is becoming less polarised”. Interviewees agreed that the public are most likely to be aware of land reform in relation to responsible access and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) and community land buyouts.

Perceived effects of land reform policy

- The majority of interviewees noted that there is a perception among the general public that land reform mainly affects and is only relevant to communities in rural areas. Nevertheless, this urban-rural separation was said to be undergoing a shift, with land reform perceived as increasingly relevant to urban contexts, such as in relation to abandoned/derelict land and communities aiming to purchase land in the South of Scotland or the Central Belt.
- Several interviewees discussed the Scottish Land Commission as important for increasing awareness of land reform, including through: i) providing new information and statements; ii) helping to redefine the land reform agenda through raising awareness of the benefits to Scottish society; iii) researching areas that are less obvious in their link to land reform; and iv) increasing awareness among young people.

- There were some differences between the views of interviewees on the effect of land reform on the general public. This was mainly due to a perceived lack of clarity on what constitutes land reform and the view among some interviewees that certain specific groups were more directly affected by land reform. Specific important current and potential future effects of land reform recognised by interviewees included increasing access to land for housing, bringing derelict land into use for community benefit and addressing underlying issues of rural depopulation (for example, housing affordability and youth out-migration).

Main challenges relating to public awareness and understanding of land reform

- Three main challenges were raised in relation to increasing public awareness, understanding and engagement with land reform: i) the complexity of the planning system, which is perceived as inaccessible, requiring specialist knowledge, and off-putting; ii) clarity of land reform policy with the cross-sectoral and multi-faceted nature of land reform resulting in confusion as to what it is in practice; iii) the effect of community capacity on outcomes, with well-resourced communities often better positioned to take advantages of the opportunities of land reform legislation.

Re-engaging the public in land use decision making and land reform

- The majority of interviewees agreed that the current levels of community engagement in land use-decision making are not sufficient.
- Several interviewees noted that to engage people effectively and increase wider societal awareness required a reframing of land reform discourse. This should move beyond existing terminology and stereotypes, towards clear identification of specific measures and outcomes, the beneficiaries, and the relevance of the concept to all (rural and urban) Scottish people.
- Effective capacity building was widely recognised as critical to ensuring informed and inclusive community engagement across all communities (including disadvantaged communities) and avoidance of volunteer fatigue.

Future thoughts

- Community ownership was recognised by interviewees as being in a relatively early stage of development as a sector, with the full outcomes likely to be better understood over the longer term.
- Most interviewees agreed that the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement is improving societal engagement with the land and improving relations between landowners and the general public.

2. Aims and method

Aims of the research

The aim of the research was to explore the public's attitudes to land reform and community engagement and provide a nuanced understanding of what policy options are likely to meet the public's priorities. The research:

- provides insight on what the public priorities are for land reform and what their understanding of land reform in Scotland is
- offers recommendations for policy on directions for future land reform and what might be done to increase the public's awareness of Scottish land reform

Method

This research project was conducted by Ipsos MORI Scotland in partnership with Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), from early 2020 to Autumn 2020. A mixed-method approach was adopted, including:

- an evidence review of currently available literature on public attitudes to land reform in Scotland, supplemented by eight interviews with expert stakeholders (summarised in Box 3 in Chapter 1 and in full in Annex 1)
- a mixed mode (online and telephone) survey of 1,501 respondents aged 16+
- a deliberative stage which involved 10 online workshops and 12 depth interviews

Evidence review

An important goal of this stage was to establish the evidence base to inform the development of the survey and workshops. The review began with background to contemporary land reform in Scotland, before exploring the main themes of land reform. This provided some boundaries for the types of topics that would be considered in the later parts of the project. It then turned to a discussion of recent work that has considered public understanding of these themes, as well as public perspectives in relation to land use more generally. The review was based on collation of relevant published and grey literature relating to these themes and the production of a concise review. The evidence review is provided in full at Annex 1.

Expert interviews

Scoping interviews were undertaken with eight experts who have professional experience and understanding of public attitudes to land reform. Interviews were

undertaken by telephone and lasted on average around 45-60 minutes. The experts were asked to discuss the range of public attitudes towards land and land reform policies, public attitudes to engagement in land use decision making, public awareness of land reform, and how prevalent they thought different attitudes are in different places and in different types of communities.

The main themes emerging from these interviews (together with the evidence review) informed the subsequent development of the survey and workshop questions and are set out the summary box 3 in Chapter 1 and in full in Annex 1.

Mixed-mode survey of the Scottish public

A mixed mode (telephone and online) survey of the public in Scotland was then conducted to explore public perceptions of land, awareness and attitudes to land reform issues and levels of interest in engagement in land use decision making and barriers to involvement.

In advance of the fieldwork period, the questionnaire underwent cognitive testing with twelve participants, and this testing informed the development of the survey.

The fieldwork was conducted between 29 May and 24 June 2020. The survey involved 1,000 respondents who took part online and 501 respondents who took part by telephone. The online respondents were recruited from the Ipsos Interactive Services online panel, with quotas set on age, gender, working status and Scottish Parliament region. The telephone survey sample was generated using a combination of methods – firstly, Random Digit Dialling (RDD) generated telephone numbers at random, and secondly this was supplemented with targeted sampling, using records which list numbers by user age, including mobile phone numbers. The survey took 10 minutes for respondents to complete. The questionnaire can be found in Annex 2.

The telephone interviewing was intended to boost the response rate from those individuals whose response was disproportionately lower online (when compared to the profile of the Scottish public). Quotas were therefore set for the telephone interviewing to ensure the final sample was representative of the Scottish population in terms of gender, age group, working status, and Scottish Parliament region. The data were also weighted to correct for any remaining differences in response on these measures.

Deliberative research

Following the survey research, deliberative research, in the form of workshops and in-depth interviews, was conducted to explore participants' views in more depth. Deliberative research is a form of qualitative research where participants are

presented with information in the course of the discussion. This allows more informed discussion of issues and time for reflection. This is particularly useful when testing policy ideas among people who may not have previously considered the issues in depth.

The ongoing Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic required a number of changes to the research plan and the timescales. In particular, the deliberative stage of the research required adaptation as the original intention was to conduct this stage face-to-face. The initial plan was that the deliberative stage would involve four, three-hour workshops across Scotland. Instead, nine online groups of three to eight people were carried out.

47 participants took part in nine online discussion groups conducted from late September 2020 to late October 2020. Three of these groups were made up of participants with a varied mix of demographic characteristics, while the other six were recruited to focus on the following specific groups:

- young urban populations
- older urban populations from areas more deprived areas (based on SIMD⁷)
- younger rural populations
- older rural populations
- those who said in the survey that their awareness of Scottish Government land reform policy was low
- those who said in the survey that they had previously been involved in land use decision making

The discussion groups were conducted online using Zoom, and each lasted two and a half hours. They were deliberative in nature, and participants were presented with information on land reform issues (developed by Ipsos MORI and SRUC, and signed off by the Scottish Government) and prompted to explore their views together. This approach was decided because an important challenge in exploring public attitudes to land reform is the public's low awareness of the issue. The deliberative group format, thus, provided participants with sufficient and balanced information so as to stimulate more informed discussion.

⁷ SIMD stands for Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation – it is a tool for identifying the places where people are experiencing most disadvantage across different aspects of their lives <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-index-multiple-deprivation-2020/>

Recruitment for the online groups was slow, and although participants were over-recruited for every group, turnout was lower than expected. For that reason, it was difficult to predict the demographic make-up of the resulting groups. Overall, more women (28) than men (19) participated.

A further 12 participants participated in telephone depth interviews, each lasting 45 to 60 minutes and conducted between mid-October to mid-November 2020. These depth interviews helped ensure that those who were not comfortable with taking part over the internet or those who were not confident participating in group discussions were not excluded.

All participants were recruited from respondents to the telephone survey who had said they would be willing to participate in more detailed follow-up research.

For the rest of the report, the workshops and in-depth interview research will be collectively referred to as the 'deliberative research'.

3. Prior perceptions about the benefits of Scotland's land and current challenges

This chapter places the findings of the research in context by setting out survey findings on the perceived benefits of Scotland's land and the biggest challenges for the future. It also describes views on these issues raised by participants at the start of the deliberative research workshops, before they were presented with additional information.

Main findings and implications

When thinking about 'land in Scotland', participants tended to think first about rural land that has not been built on. There was a perception among urban participants that land was something 'out there' and located away from where most people live. This has implications for how land reform is positioned: a greater emphasis on the urban elements (both urban greenspace and buildings), and buildings in rural towns and villages, may help engage more of the public and help them see the relevance of land reform to their own lives.

There was a strong sense of pride among participants when thinking of Scotland's land and an awareness of the wide range of ways in which Scotland's land benefits individuals and the country as a whole. There was also recognition of some of the trade-offs and tensions (for example, the need for housing versus protecting greenspace and the wellbeing benefits of recreation in the countryside versus the damage caused by irresponsible visitors).

There was also an awareness of many of the challenges and the following issues were raised unprompted: concentrated land ownership, absentee landlords, housing developments encroaching on the green belt, derelict land, land banking⁸ and disputes over access rights.

In the survey, broadly similar numbers of people viewed each of the following as the biggest challenge for the future of Scotland's land: climate change, building on greenspace, inequality in land ownership, and housing shortages.

In the deliberative research, a common theme was the issue of land not being used to benefit the communities that lived on it. Participants cited: a lack of affordable housing and community facilities, vacant and derelict land, tipping and rubbish, and developments such as golf courses which were perceived as providing little value to the local community. Again, this suggests that a greater emphasis on community benefits and identifying local needs and priorities may encourage engagement.

⁸ Where developers or investors purchase land and then sit on it, without developing it, in the hope of making a greater profit in the future when the value of the land has increased.

Associations with land

Participants in the deliberative research were asked to write a few words about what comes to mind when they think of “land in Scotland”. Typically, both urban and rural participants first mentioned rural land that had not been built on, referring to Scotland’s hills, fields, farmland, coast and its “natural beauty” as a benefit for local people and a draw for tourists. Other common associations included “unspoilt”, “tranquil” and “open space”.

“The most beautiful land and scenery - couldn't get much better – great for walks and exercise.”

Older Urban interview participant

“Beautiful and varied – going from forests to rocky mountains, beautiful, lochs and rivers and streams.”

Mixed group participant

The diversity of Scotland’s land was also noted, however, with participants contrasting sparsely populated rural land with densely populated towns and cities.

The wide variety of land use and the opportunities it presented were noted: recreation, farmland, forestry, renewable energy, a home for wildlife, and housing. There was also some mention of contaminated land and unused derelict land.

“There’s a dichotomy when it comes to land use – wide open spaces in the country, dense population putting more pressure on urban places.”

Mixed group participant

“Nice countryside for walking but also derelict land.”

Younger Urban group participant

There was a strong sense of pride among participants when thinking of Scotland’s land, and links were made to culture and heritage. Many initial associations related to rural landscapes and landscape-scale features. Land was described as ‘historic’ as well as ‘beautiful’, qualities which people believed attract many visitors to Scotland.

There were also participants for whom challenges surrounding land use were at the forefront of their thinking. Several issues were mentioned unprompted including concentrated land ownership, absentee landlords, housing developments encroaching on the green belt, derelict land, land banking⁹ and disputes over access rights.

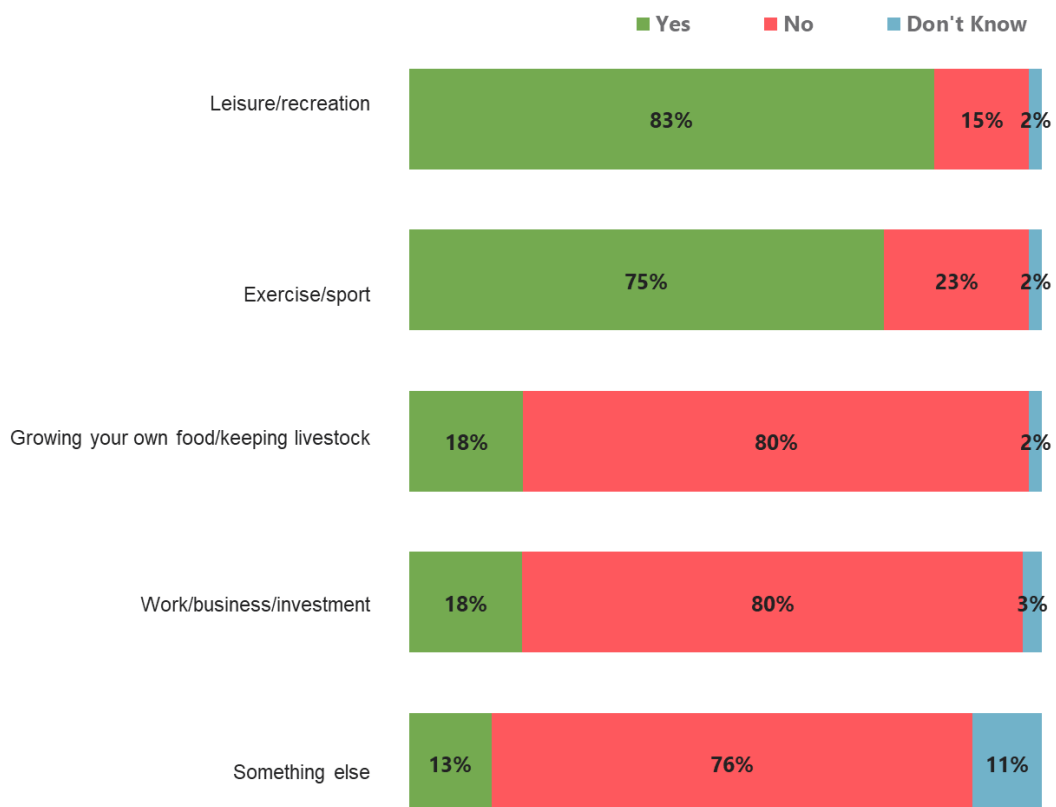
⁹ Where developers or investors purchase land and then retain it, without developing it, in the hope of making a greater profit in the future when the value of the land has increased.

Use and personal benefits of land in Scotland

Survey respondents were asked about the ways in which they used land in their local area and given a list of possible response options. Respondents could choose all the response options that applied to them. The most common responses were 'leisure/recreation' (83% said they used land in this way) and 'exercise/sport' (75%). Younger people were more likely to say they used the land for exercise/sport (83% of 16 to 34 year-olds and 80% of 35 to 54 year-olds compared to 65% of those aged 55 and over).

It was much less common for people to say they used the land to grow their own food or keep livestock (18%) or for work/business/investment (also 18%).

Figure 3.1 Q Thinking about the land in your local area, do you use it for...?



Base: All (n=1501)

These findings were echoed in the deliberative research with participants emphasising the benefits of access to rural areas to them and their families. There was a perception among urban participants that land was something 'out there' and located away from where most people live. A frequently made point was that one of the advantages of living in Scotland, even in the cities, was the easy access to 'empty', 'wild' and scenic areas. While access to rural areas tended to dominate the discussion, participants also talked about the importance of parks and natural spaces in urban areas. Specific benefits identified – of both rural and urban spaces – included physical fitness, mental health and mindfulness/reflection. The

importance of statutory access rights or ‘the right to roam’ featured heavily in these discussions. Housing was also identified, less often, as a personal benefit of the land.

“The countryside, the hills, the beauty, the silence, to be able to escape, to think. A break from reality and busy towns.”

Older Rural interview participant

“Natural land - the Munros are good for people's health.”

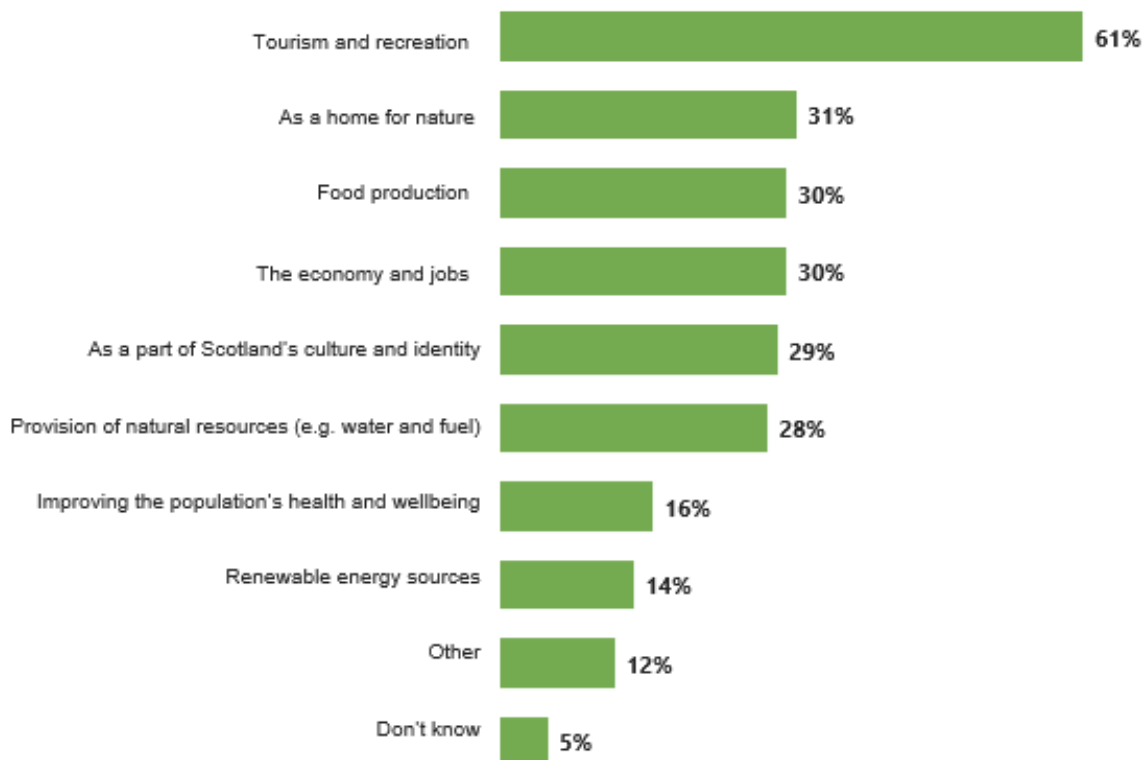
Younger Rural interview participant

Benefits of the land to Scotland as a whole

Survey respondents and participants in the deliberative research were also asked how they thought the country, as a whole, benefits from its land.

Survey respondents could choose up to three answers from a list of response options. The most common answer was ‘tourism and recreation’. Men were slightly more likely than women to name the following benefits: food production (34% compared to 27%), the economy and jobs (33% compared to 27%), natural resources (31% compared to 25%), and renewable energy sources (17% compared to 12%). Women were more likely to say ‘improving the population’s health and wellbeing’ was one of the benefits (20% of women compared to 14% of men).

Figure 3.2 Q How does the land in Scotland benefit the country as a whole?



The benefits discussed in the deliberative research echoed the survey findings with tourism and recreation, food production, and the economy and jobs, all featuring heavily. Whisky production and renewable energy were also frequently mentioned.

“Renewable energy... [and] the land brings huge economic benefits, through farming, whisky, tourism –industry.”

Mixed group participant

“Land can be used to grow fruit and vegetables – for farming, etc. which is better than importing food from elsewhere- people can buy local food.”

Younger Urban interview participant

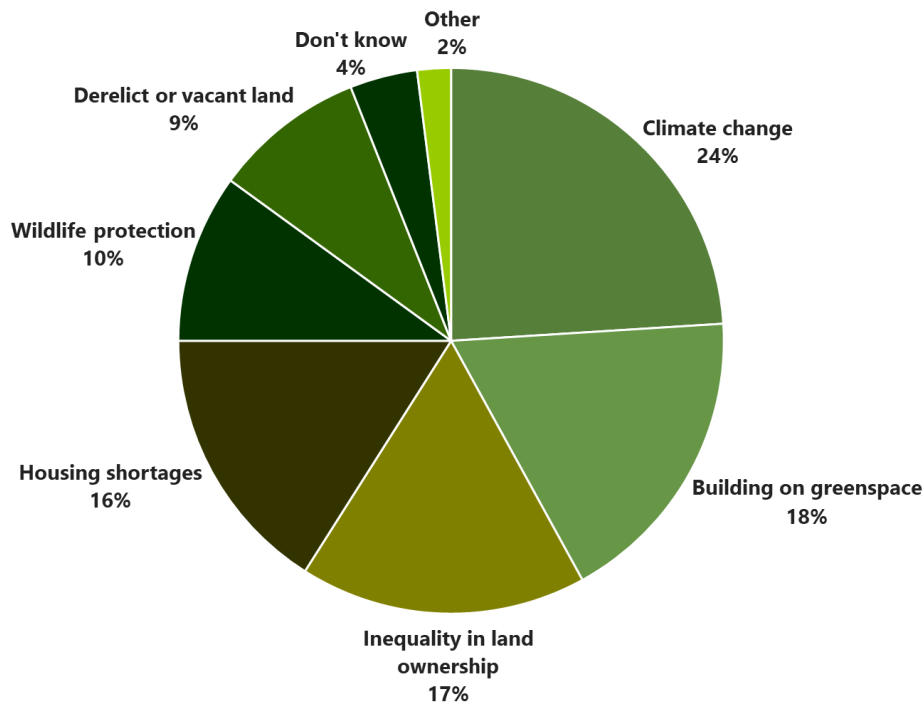
However, its role as a ‘home for nature’ was rarely mentioned in discussions of the benefits.

Challenges to the future of Scotland’s land

The most common answer, selected from the provided response options, to the survey question ‘Which of the following would you say is the biggest challenge for the future of Scotland’s land?’ was ‘climate change’ (24%), followed by ‘building on greenspace’ (18%), ‘inequality in land ownership’ (17%) and ‘housing shortages’ (16%).

Young people were more likely than older age groups to say that ‘wildlife protection’ was the biggest challenge (14% of 16 to 34 year-olds compared to 9% of those aged 35 and over). Older people were more likely to think that inequality in land ownership was the main challenge (22% of those aged 55 and over thought so, compared to 12% of 16 to 34 year-olds and 16% of 35 to 54 year-olds).

Figure 3.3 Q Which of the following would you say is the biggest challenge for the future of Scotland’s land?



Base: All (n=1501)

While all these issues featured in the deliberative discussions, some themes were more dominant than others. A common theme was the issue of land not being used to benefit the communities that lived on it. Participants cited a lack of affordable housing, a lack of community facilities, vacant and derelict land, fly-tipping and rubbish, and developments such as golf courses which were perceived by some providing little value to the local community. One participant explained how this was having a negative effect on young people in their town:

“There’s not much space for teenagers to do things and that causes them to become destructive because they’re bored. There’s nothing for teenagers to do. We need safe spaces for teenagers to go to do activities or sports.”

Older Rural interview participant

“Land is being ruined by rubbish and tipping – a lack of respect for the environment...And vacant land. There’s a vacant site in my area that was a social club.”

Older Urban interview participant

Participants also described several challenges related to planning and development. Widespread housing shortages and building on greenspace were both consistently mentioned as significant and conflicting challenges, with

participants recognising the competing interests at play. Derelict and vacant land were also identified as areas affected by planning issues. A better planning system with more consideration given to the needs of local people and the protection of rural land close to towns, was felt to be needed to meet this challenge. It was agreed there should be a focus on the availability of affordable housing to ensure that younger people were not out-competed in local housing markets.

“Lack of housing for some, in some areas especially. Sometimes it feels like there isn’t enough housing for those who need it. But at the same time, sometimes too many houses can ruin the scenery.”

Older Rural interview participant

Inequality in land ownership, and concerns about the inequitable distribution of land were also identified spontaneously as a challenge.

“Large swathes owned by one person, for example in the Borders for hunting, shooting, fishing - it could be better used for the benefit of the people than narrow interest.”

Older Rural interview participant

Although tourism was identified as a benefit, the challenges associated with this featured strongly in the deliberative research. Participants expressed concern about there being too many tourists in some rural areas (and the resulting strain on local services) and a general disrespect for rural land by some visitors. This was particularly related to recent increases in wild camping during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many other holiday options were limited. Littering, fires, and generally irresponsible behaviour were identified as problems.

“Some rural communities face challenges from tourism – abuse to natural beauty – dirty camping, wild camping, littering, a general lack of respect for the land, a lack of responsibility taken.”

Previously involved in land use decision-making group

“We need to protect natural beauty. People are not looking after it, littering, making fires, not caring, leaving dog poo, making it disgusting.”

Younger Urban group participant

The challenge of climate change was not brought up often in the deliberative research, despite being the most frequently selected option from a list of challenges in the survey. Perhaps this discrepancy is partly explained by the fact that the discussion of challenges followed from discussion of benefits which began with participants’ personal and direct experiences. The environmental challenges which were identified included increased flooding and coastal erosion due to climate change; the use of pesticides; and loss of wildlife.

“Can I mention the big-ticket climate change thing? It’s challenging everything, for example, people getting flooded and bigger changes.”

Mixed group participant

Addressing conflicts around land use

Participants in the deliberative research were asked what they felt should be done to address conflicts around land use. A range of different ideas were put forward.

Where there were heated clashes over specific uses of the land, there was a common suggestion that the two sides should come together to have a conversation. Some suggested that, if necessary, this should be with an independent arbitrator. The role of the arbitrator would be to chair a discussion with both sides and identify the pros and cons of opposing plans.

“When there is a disagreement, both sides should have a thorough conversation and come to a mutual agreement/compromise.”

Older Rural interview participant

“It would be good to have an independent referee. It’s very important then there’s no bias.”

Older Urban interview participant

More generally, participants spontaneously advocated local communities having a meaningful and informed say about how land should be used, with formal discussion and consultation with all residents.

“Everybody should be involved...Locals should have their say and businesses.”

Older Urban interview participant

“Councils and government should get together to see what people want to use the land for, consulting with local residents.”

Older Urban interview participant

“Consultation with everybody. I think dialogue’s probably the most important thing. You need to understand the problem from different ways of looking at it. A vote by the community. Need to have the consultation before so everybody understands.”

Urban interview participant

Where the conflict was in relation to access, there was a view that one reason for problems was a lack of understanding about rights and responsibilities around land

use and access. It was felt therefore that, in many cases, greater transparency and awareness of rights and responsibilities could help address these issues.

“Making clear what people’s responsibilities are when it comes to the land.”

Previously involved in land use decision-making group participant

4. Awareness and initial reactions to the Scottish Government's land reform agenda

Main findings and implications

There were mixed levels of prior awareness of the term 'land reform' and what it might involve – but a general sense that it was a positive development.

When asked more specifically about awareness of the Scottish Government's plans for land reform, awareness was low: 73% of survey respondents said they knew 'not very much' or 'nothing at all'.

When presented with an overview of the Scottish Government's aims for land reform and the main elements of the 2003 and 2016 Land Reform (Scotland) Acts, participants were, overall, very supportive of the aims. More exceptionally, there were negative reactions or concerns. These tended to relate to how well CRtB would work in practice.

The dominant view was that 'land reform' was not a particularly good term. It was seen as vague and unclear – 'it doesn't mean much to ordinary people' – and made people think only of rural, undeveloped land. However, there was no consensus on a better term.

Awareness of the term 'land reform'

In the deliberative research, after exploring initial associations with land, participants were asked if they were aware of the term 'land reform'. Responses ranged from those who indicated they were well aware of it, to those who were aware of specific aspects (most commonly the community right to buy), to those who had not heard the term or had heard it but did not know anything about it.

Some made historical associations – there were references to the Clearances, the enclosure movement and the history of the USSR – which they had learned about at school or university. Awareness of more recent developments came from the news, work or political involvement.

Despite the mixed levels of awareness of what 'land reform' might involve, there was a general sense that it was a positive development.

Awareness of the Scottish Government's land reform agenda

When asked more specifically about awareness of the Scottish Government's plans for land reform, awareness was low. The survey found that most (73%) knew 'not very much' or 'nothing at all' about the Scottish Government's land reform agenda. Just 4% said they knew 'a lot' and a further 20% 'a little'. Those living in rural areas were more likely to say they knew at least a little (34% in rural areas compared to 22% in urban areas).

Table 4.1 Q How much, if anything, do you know about the Scottish Government’s plans for land reform in Scotland?

	%
A lot	4
A little	20
Not very much	37
Nothing at all	36
Don’t know	3

Base: All (n=1501)

Although participants in the deliberative workshops and interviews often showed an awareness of land reform and gave examples of rural community buyouts or mentioned the ‘right to roam’, they did not necessarily connect these to the Scottish Government. When asked directly what they knew about the Scottish Government’s land reform plans, they tended to say they did not know anything.

Reactions to introductory information on the Scottish Government’s land reform agenda

Participants in the deliberative research were given an overview of the Scottish Government’s aims for land reform and the main elements of the 2003 and 2016 Land Reform Acts.

Some surprise was expressed about how recent the legislation was. Another aspect which struck people was the CRtB for urban communities – many of those who were aware of the CRtB for rural and crofting communities had not known this had been extended.

Overall, participants were generally very supportive of the aims of land reform and some felt the policies did not go far enough. Others indicated that, while they supported the aims in principle, support for specifics would depend on the detail.

“I think it is very sensible. I support it 100%.”

Younger urban interview participant

“It doesn’t go far enough. No taxation, no directory of who owns what and how it changes hands. Sounds like a reasonable start but doesn’t go far enough.”

Mixed group participant

“It’s very noble and hard to disagree with. And very high level. The problem is when it does something people disagree with.”

Mixed group participant

Support for the land reform agenda was often explained with reference to its potential to achieve wider social aims such as equality and fairness, and rarely with reference to specific examples of how policies might benefit participants personally. This non-specific or intangible aspect of land reform was reflected in wider discussions relating to a lack of detail, perceptions of limited impact or vagueness in terminology.

More exceptionally, however, there were negative initial reactions (mainly in relation to CRtB). These included scepticism about how well CRtB would work in practice, including whether it would always further the cause of social justice, concerns about how well it would work generations down the line, and whether it was the best use of public funds.

Views on the term 'Land Reform'

One participant spontaneously raised the issue of terminology:

“Some of these terms, like ‘community buy-out’ and ‘land reform’, I find quite daunting and I’m quite educated.”

Younger Rural group participant

After they had been given an overview of what land reform involved and had discussed it, participants in the deliberative research were asked whether they thought ‘land reform’ was a good description.

One view was that that the term was fine – it was short, descriptive and ‘does what it says on the tin’. The dominant view, however, was that it was not a particularly good term. It was felt to be vague and unclear (‘it doesn’t mean much to ordinary people’), boring or old-fashioned. A common criticism was that it made people think only of rural, undeveloped land. Another association was with physically reshaping land.

“It sounds dull and if it’s just about the law [...] and not something that people would think was relevant to them.”

Mixed group participant

Alternative suggestions included ‘people and places’ (some felt it important to include ‘people’ or ‘communities’ in the description), ‘land balance and equity’ and ‘land use reform’. However, there was no consensus on a better term.

5. Diversification of land ownership

This section will first address the public's awareness of land ownership in Scotland, and of the Scottish Government's plans to diversify it. It will then explore opinions on land ownership and, specifically, the Community Right to Buy.

Main findings and implications

Survey respondents were more aware of Scottish Government policy supporting communities to buy land and buildings than they were of its plans for land reform more generally: 40% of people said they were aware of this policy.

The majority thought there was not enough information available about who owns the land in Scotland.

Most people said they supported the Scottish Government's plans to diversify land ownership (34% strongly support, 37% tend to support, and only 7% were opposed). In the deliberative discussions, there was general support for a greater number of landowners (though less focus on widening the types of owners). However, others felt it mattered less who owned the land, and more how they treated it – for example, whether they gave locals a say and whether they made efforts to protect the environment. Among those who did not support diversification, the existence of 'good' large landowners who looked after the land and provided economic opportunities was often cited.

There was also sometimes a misconception that diversification might entail taking land involuntarily from landowners or compulsory purchase – and this was seen as unfair. This highlights the need for clear communication about what diversification does and does not involve.

There was a range of views on CRtB. Those who were supportive tended to think that those who lived in an area were best placed to determine the way the land is used and would be more likely to have the economic and social wellbeing of the local community at heart. Participants were particularly positive about an example given of community buying a local church and turning it into a community space. They were able to connect this to their own areas more easily than the examples of community land purchases (of which they had more prior awareness). This suggests that more promotion of urban examples and examples of community purchase of smaller assets is required.

There was also a feeling that urban examples, where communities bought existing buildings or relatively small amounts of unused land, benefitted a greater number of people, for a much lower cost, than rural examples of relatively large land purchases where populations were small. There was an implicit desire, from some, for the costs and benefits of CRtB purchases to be assessed.

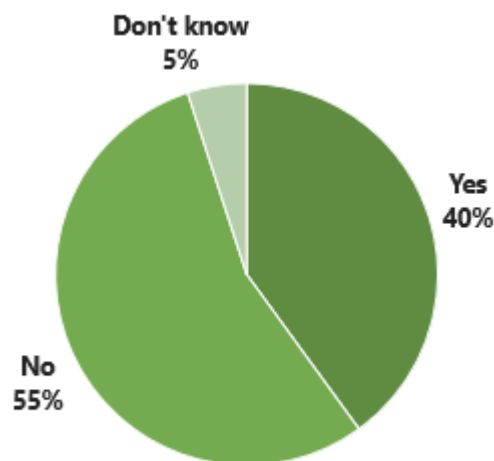
There was a concern that communities might lack the necessary skills and resources to take over and run the assets (particularly when those behind the initial

purchase moved on). This led some to oppose the policy while others remained supportive but recognised the need for education and development support.

One perspective, among those who were ambivalent about community buyouts, was that the policy placed an unfair burden on individuals and communities to manage the land and local assets, relinquishing responsibility from public bodies. This highlighted a difference between those who viewed buy-outs as empowering versus those who saw them as a potential burden.

Survey respondents were more aware of Scottish Government policy supporting communities to buy land and buildings than they were of its plans for land reform more generally: 40% of people said they were aware of this policy, with higher levels of awareness among rural populations (55%). It was also more common for those aged 55 and over to be aware (47%) than 16 to 34 year-olds (34%) or 35 to 54 year-olds (36%).

Figure 5.1 Q Were you aware that the Scottish Government supports communities in Scotland to buy and own areas of land and buildings?



Base: All (n=1501)

Transparency of ownership

On the issue of transparency of ownership, the majority thought there was 'definitely not' (31%) or 'probably not' (42%) enough information available about who owns the land in Scotland.

Table 5.2 Q Do you think there is enough information available about who owns the land in Scotland?

	%
Yes, definitely	3
Yes, probably	14
No, probably not	42
No, definitely not	31
Don't know	10

Base: All (n=1501)

This finding was echoed in the deliberative research, in which participants expressed dissatisfaction with current levels of transparency. Participants thought it was important that information on land ownership in Scotland was accessible because it was the only way to know if things are done fairly (meaning, how power and resources are distributed). Some had experience of using Scotland's land register but had not found it completely straightforward. There was a view that although there was a good deal of information available, it was not always accessible and it was not clear where to look.

Views on diversifying land ownership and Community Right to Buy

Participants in the deliberative research were asked whether they thought it mattered who owned Scotland's land. A range of views were expressed.

Among those who thought it did matter, several reasons were cited. Generally, there was support for a greater number of landowners, but less focus on widening the types of owners. There was some discomfort about a handful of people owning 'huge tracts' of land as it seemed fundamentally unfair. This was linked to a view that ownership mattered because 'that is where the power lies', and it determines 'whose interests are served'. Another reason focused more on the benefits of having a more equal distribution of land. It was thought that owning the land you live on made people more inclined to take care of it (as opposed to living on someone else's land and having less control, or owning land but not living on it). Furthermore, there was a view that more owners meant more ideas for how to use the land to benefit all.

"It's hugely important – you can transform a peat bog into a forest or a sheep farm – if different people own it, they may have very different ideas."

Mixed group participant

Participants felt concentration of ownership was at the expense of the majority of people benefiting from the land, and that it had implications for access to and use of the land, as well as ownership.

"Land ownership inequality is a big issue. Somebody in a rural area in the Highlands wanting to get one wee site to build a house for the next generation and a local landowner won't sell them it."

Older Urban group participant

"The land is owned by very few, the balance is completely wrong. Not enough of the citizens of Scotland get to use the land."

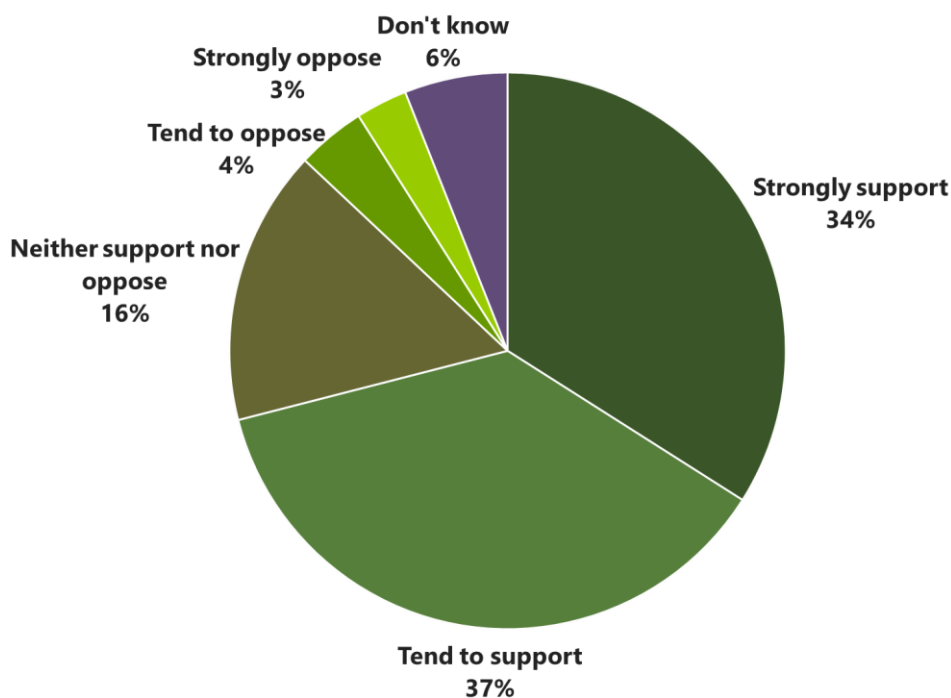
Older Urban group participant

For others, it mattered less who owned the land, and more how they treated the land – for example, whether they gave locals a say in decisions relating to the land,

whether they were present locally (as opposed to ‘absentee landowners’), and whether they made efforts to protect the local environment. Particular scorn was expressed for landowners (particularly corporations) who engaged in ‘land banking’ – in other words, they retained land without developing it for long term financial gain rather than using it in a way that might benefit the community or the environment. There was a suggestion that land should only be sold on the condition that it would be put to good use, or that if landowners are not going to do anything with the land, they should let the community use it. Another view on this issue was that it mattered little who owns the land, so long as there are regulations in place to limit any damaging activities and to protect against environmental harm.

The survey found that most people said they supported the Scottish Government’s plans to diversify land ownership (34% strongly support, 37% tend to support, and only 7% in opposition).

Figure 5.3 Levels of agreement with the Scottish Government’s aim to diversify land ownership in Scotland



Base: All (n=1501)

Among those who did not support diversification, the existence of ‘good’ large landowners who looked after the land and provided economic opportunities was often cited. A degree of concern was expressed that diversification might entail taking land involuntarily away from landowners or compulsory purchase – and this was seen as unfair.

Participants expressed a full range of views for and against community buyouts as a route to diversification. In support of these measures, there was a strong perception that the way land is used should be determined by those who live in the area. Participants mentioned examples where residents were limited by absentee landlords from taking steps that would benefit the local economy, grow the population, and allow younger people to stay in their local area.

Participants were shown two examples of past community buyouts (the Isle of Ulva and Bellfield Parish Church in Portobello) and were particularly positive about the example of the church, which was bought by residents in 2017 and now serves as a community space. Participants had not necessarily considered the possibilities of CRtB in the urban setting and were able to connect the Portobello example to their own area more easily than the examples of rural community land purchases. There was also a feeling that urban examples, where communities bought existing buildings or relatively small amounts of unused land, benefitted a greater number of people, for a much lower cost, than rural examples of relatively large land purchases where populations were small. This may well have been prompted by giving the Isle of Ulva, with a population of just six, as an example. Nevertheless, it served to uncover genuine concerns about the relative costs and benefits of community buyouts.

On the opposing side, there were concerns about whether communities were equipped to manage land and buildings. There was a concern that they may not have the necessary resources, knowledge and management systems, particularly as these sorts of projects are often led by a small number of volunteers. Some participants expressed concern about what would happen if there were conflicts within communities over what to do with land, or if future generations were not invested in carrying on the work.

To minimise the likelihood of these potential issues, participants felt that there should be more awareness raised so people know they have the option, and more support for communities who want to pursue it – not only financial support, but help with fundraising, managing the asset, conflict resolution and other practical concerns.

“If people in Aberdeen own land in Aberdeen, then they will know what it needs more than someone in Dumfries – but this needs to be balanced with education and supervision. The more of this there is, then the more individuals there will be needing education and supervision. I know that on community councils there are individuals who are stalwarts, who will put a stop to someone installing decking because they don't like look of them, or they had row with their auntie – so there needs to be governance.”

Younger Rural group participant

One perspective, among those who were ambivalent about community buyouts, was that the policy placed an unfair burden on individuals and communities to manage the land and local assets, relinquishing responsibility from local authorities and other public actors. This highlighted a difference between those who viewed buyouts as empowering versus those who saw them as a potential burden. It also exposed a desire for more and better community facilities without necessarily wanting to own and run them.

A very different type of opposition came from those who felt uncomfortable with the CRtB not because they objected to community ownership, but because they objected to the fact that the community did not already own the land they lived on. They felt that CRtB meant giving large amounts of public money to landowners who don't need or deserve it, and whose ancestors likely 'stole the land in the first place'. There were concerns about the amount of money and work that communities were expected to put in to purchase land that they live on and are invested in. One participant spoke about Gigha, an island which was bought by local residents from its owner in 2002 for £4m, and another area owned by the Duke of Buccleuch.

“Why should Gigha have had to raise so much money and pay the landowner, they should have been given it. It all boiled up for me recently when the Duke of Buccleuch got £4m for a grouse land, it was poor quality of land for farming so why was it so much? Fair play to the locals who got it, I'm sure it'll be really good but why should the landowner get so much money?”

Older Urban group participant

This process was seen as problematic for participants who resented that communities and taxpayers paid significant sums to landowners perceived as wealthy. Questions were also raised over whether landowners even had a legal right to their land.

“And historically it seemed to be that land was passed from one hand to another as dowry for a daughter, or because they wanted them on their side for a battle or something, and it actually wasn't legal. [Politician] was doing work on getting that land back into the hands of the people.”

Older Urban group participant

There were also those who supported the CRtB in theory, but felt they would have to know more detail about individual cases before they committed to supporting them – especially given the amount of money involved in these buyouts.

6. Vacant and Derelict Land

This section will first address the level of concern among the Scottish public over vacant and derelict land before exploring awareness of, and attitudes towards, Scottish Government policy on this issue.

Main findings and implications

The survey revealed that a considerable proportion (44%) of the public are concerned about vacant or derelict land in their own area. This issue resonated more personally than other aspects of land reform. This suggests there is more scope to engage the public in this aspect of land reform.

Even among those who had little vacant or derelict land near them, there were concerns about the detrimental effect on wellbeing for those who did.

There was a concern that it can be in the interests of landowners to keep land derelict and support for tighter regulations to limit this.

There was low awareness of the Scottish Government's aim to reduce the amount of vacant and derelict land and to give local communities the chance to take control of the land – and an assumption that the Government could be doing more given the current extent of the problem.

There was a positive reaction to the example of the Shettleston Community Growing Project. Participants were particularly supportive of given communities the resources to improve their local area and meet the needs of local people. There was a recognition that communities may need support to do this effectively. Less commonly, there was a view that this was an unfair way to shift responsibility for provision of amenities from public bodies to local communities.

There was a worry that some derelict land will not be suitable for communities to use as it could be polluted or contaminated. Reassurances should be provided in guidance to communities who might be interested in taking control of land that appropriate safety checks would always apply and who would be responsible for these.

Levels of concern

Survey respondents were asked how concerned they were about vacant and derelict land in their area. The introductory text read:

'Vacant and derelict land is land which has typically been used in the past for industrial purposes or previously been built on, but is not currently being used'.

Respondents were split on this issue with just under half (44%) saying they were ‘very’ or ‘fairly concerned’, while just over half (55%) said they were ‘not very’ or ‘not at all concerned’.

Figure 6.1 Q How concerned are you about vacant or derelict land in your area?



Base: 1501 adults in Scotland aged 16+

Levels of concern were highest among:

- older respondents - those aged 55 and over were more likely (45%) than 16 to 34 year olds (38%) to be concerned
- those in more deprived areas - 51% in SIMD 1 areas and 47% in SIMD 2 areas compared with 38% in SIMD 4 areas and 36% SIMD 5 areas
- those living in Glasgow - 52% were ‘very’ or ‘fairly concerned’ compared with 42% across Scotland as a whole.

“There’s all types [of vacant or derelict land]. Commercial and residential. estates are being knocked down, sometimes developed with more [buildings]. But it's destroying communities.”

Older Urban interview participant

Those living in remote rural areas were less concerned about vacant or derelict land (29% compared with 42% in Scotland overall). This may reflect a view raised in the deliberative groups – by both urban and rural participants – that vacant or derelict land in the countryside is not as much of a problem as it is in towns (including small rural towns) and cities. Reasons behind this distinction included: the view that some abandoned buildings are part of Scotland’s cultural heritage, that they are less visible in rural areas, and that they can be a normal – sometimes picturesque – part of the rural landscape.

“Old farm buildings doesn’t [concern me], in the middle of field, no one sees, barn owls like them - but Aberdeen city centre has gorgeous red brick buildings going to ruin.”

Younger Rural Group participant

Other than this, there was a strong view across the groups that vacant and derelict land in Scotland was a concern. This issue resonated more personally than other aspects of land reform which participants did not see as so directly relevant to their

own lives (even if they had a view on the rights or wrongs of different policies). However, even among those who were not personally concerned about vacant land near them, there were concerns about the effect on others of vacant land elsewhere.

Participants were generally able to identify vacant or derelict sites nearby, including those living in both urban and rural areas. Participants mentioned derelict buildings such as shops, flats, an old psychiatric hospital, an abandoned cinema and shopping centre. Participants also described spoiled land such as old industrial sites, old mining land and disused gasworks. There was often uncertainty over who owned the land.

There was a view that seeing derelict land, day in and day out, has a negative effect on local residents' wellbeing, because it is unattractive and shows a disregard by landowners – and by wider society – for the area and the people who live there.

“Seventies tower blocks, most depressing things I’ve ever seen – I can’t imagine the mental health effects of seeing that every day – and thinking of the absolute lack of care your council has for you.”

Younger Rural group participant

Even among those who did not feel personally affected by vacant and derelict land in their area, there was a widespread view that it was wrong to waste land that could be used for something positive. Participants listed several ways this type of land could be repurposed to benefit local communities, from building more housing to creating a space for children to play.

"It doesn't concern me it's just like, why not build something or use it?"

Younger Urban interview participant

“As long as the community can get on it and do something with it, even allotments – that’s better than a pile of rubble.”

Mixed group participant

Other worries touched on the lack of accountability from owners of derelict land. There was a concern that it can be in the interests of landowners to keep land derelict, to the detriment of the local community.

“There was a huge fire in vacant warehouses a few years ago- cost the fire service [a huge amount of money] to put out. And that was owned by business owners who just owned it as collateral for business stuff – they didn’t have to pay a penny, paid by the taxes of the people in Glasgow. I think it's really wrong they pay no rates on

empty land- should be the opposite, pay high rates because sitting on land till it builds value is not doing anything.”

Older Urban group participant

Awareness of the Scottish Government’s policies in this area

Most people (77%) were not aware of the Scottish Government’s aim to reduce the amount of vacant and derelict land in Scotland and to give local communities the chance to take control of the land, while 20% were aware of this aim.

Those who have previously been involved in decision-making about land use were more likely to be aware of the aim than those who had not (46% compared with 17%).

Awareness of the Scottish Government’s policy on vacant and derelict land was very low in the deliberative research. However, there was an assumption that it could be doing more to rectify the issue given participants personal experiences of vacant and derelict sites in their area.

Participants were given some information on the extent of derelict land in Scotland and the new community right to buy abandoned, neglected or detrimental land under the 2016 Land Reform Act. This included the example of the Shettleston Community Growing Project in the east end of Glasgow where an allotment was set up on a previously vacant site and turned into an established community hub.

There was a consistently strong positive reaction to the Shettleston example. Participants were particularly supportive of giving communities the support and resources they need to improve their local area and meet the needs of local people. There was a view that the Shettleston community garden would improve the sense of community spirit by bringing people together and giving people something to take ownership of and be proud of.

“That is what land reform should be about - making people proud of their environment and getting use of it.”

Previously involved in land use decision-making group

It was felt that the COVID-19 pandemic furthered the need for community spaces such as this, to mitigate increased levels of social isolation. Similarly, participants mentioned the added importance of improving people’s mental health by removing unattractive derelict sites during a time where people will be struggling with their mental health more than usual.

For one participant, the Shettleston community garden project broadened their perceptions of what land reform could achieve and its potential to help people and communities: “It shows that land reform is about people as much as, if not more than, about land.”

It was also pointed out that improving derelict sites could make them safer for the public to access and make it safer to walk past them after dark.

At the same time, participants raised some concerns about communities buying vacant and derelict land. There were mixed opinions on whether communities were best placed to be able to make the best use of this land and have the time or expertise required. This echoes the concerns about the broader CRtB policy.

“It’s unfair to expect people who haven’t seen an allotment to know how to run one, they need to be given support”.

Younger Rural group participant

Similarly, there was a view that repurposing local land was more of a responsibility for local councils and not for residents – while others thought it was empowering for the community to take charge. The following extract illustrates opposing views in one group:

“Participant 1: Isn’t it a case of shifting responsibility? In the normal course the council would do, this but they have shifted responsibility onto the residents.

Participant 2: I disagree. I think it’s a tremendous idea and people will put a lot more into it without the council standing over them.

Participant 3: It’s not that they are having to do it, they want to do it, to get the benefits- to build feeling of respect and community spirit.

Participant 4: There are definitely benefits and those community gardens, that needs to be more widespread.

Participant 1: True but is that because they want to or are forced to? We have a community shop here where people donate things – not because we want to but because we have to because there is no-one else to do it.”

Mixed group participants

However, there was an alternative view that communities would be able to use the land in a more effective way than local government. Furthermore, the process of looking after the land could encourage people in the local community to take on responsibility and develop new skills which would benefit them.

“Local community impact will always be 100 times better than local government impact – giving people confidence they can do things – get out and garden and that can lead to getting a job etc.”

Younger Rural group participant

There was some doubt as to whether communities would be able to maintain the land in the long term. Participants pointed out that people may care less about looking after the land once the novelty wears off, or there may be nobody to continue the work of those who originally oversaw the buyout. One participant believed that the Scottish Government should not fund the entire process as it was important for communities to fundraise and take some ownership of the project themselves and create a certain degree of buy-in.

"The longevity of these projects slightly worries me... it's coming from a great place, but you need to make sure it's still used down the line."

Previously involved in land use decision-making group

However, participants suggested this was something that could be resolved with careful planning and enough support from the Scottish Government.

"Often when something is setting up people are enthusiastic, but people might move on or die and sometimes it gets forgotten about. Handing over the reins has to be carefully managed."

Older Urban interview participant

There was a concern that some derelict land will not be suitable for communities to use as it could be polluted or contaminated and therefore unsafe. Reassurances should be provided in guidance to communities who might be interested in taking control of land that appropriate safety checks would always apply and who would be responsible for these.¹⁰

Participants broadly felt that, for this policy to work, education and awareness raising were very important. They felt that communities would need to be given a lot of information so that people were aware of the opportunity as well as being able to understand the process. There was a suggestion that the Scottish Government could employ people to help groups put in bids for land, however existing support was not discussed.

Among those who were the most supportive of the CRtB for vacant and derelict land, there was a view that the policy could go even further by making it compulsory for landowners to sell or give up land which has been vacant for a certain length of time or at least make it difficult to hold onto the land.

"If they refuse to sell the land, they should have to pay money in order to do that -I'm thinking about that hospital land [where owners

¹⁰ It should be noted that some vacant and derelict land is potentially very costly to remediate, and investigative work is initially needed to determine the appropriate options.

were refusing to sell vacant land wanted for a hospital car park] and it's a disgrace.”

Mixed group participant

There was a suggestion that local authorities could be given the power to take control of land by default if the landowner could not be identified. However, there was some resistance to this idea among those who felt it would be unfair to landowners, particularly if the land had been in their family for a long time.

7. Statutory Public Access Rights

Main findings and implications

56% of survey respondents indicated they were confident about their rights to access different types of land on foot or bicycle (42% were not confident). However, the deliberative research suggests that some of those who lack confidence about their rights have a good idea about the main principles of responsible access.

Once current access rights were explained, there was strong support for them. There was a sense of pride that Scotland had the 'right to roam', along with a sense of pride and a sense of ownership over Scotland's land.

However, there were concerns about people dropping litter, lighting fires irresponsibly, dog fouling and disturbing animals (and a view that these negative effects were exacerbated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic which has increased amount of people visiting rural land). There was a suggestion that more education and clear communication about responsible access was required.

Among the minority opposed, there was a view that current access rights go too far and diminish the rights of landowners to protect and look after their land.

Few had personally experienced a disagreement about access rights, but there was some uncertainty about what they would do if their rights were challenged – as well as what landowners should do in the event of a dispute. One particular area of uncertainty was the degree to which landowners must aid the right to roam by improving paths and/or removing barriers to accessing their land.

Overall, therefore, the participants support current access rights but think there should be more education and clarity around the respective responsibilities of the public and landowners – and what to do in the event of a dispute.

Awareness of statutory public access rights

Survey respondents were asked how confident they were about their rights to access different types of land on foot or bicycle. Overall, 56% of respondents said they were 'very' or 'fairly confident', and 42% said they were 'not very' or 'not at all confident'. Those in rural areas were most likely to say they were 'very' or 'fairly confident' (70% compared to 53% in urban areas).

Figure 7.1 Q How confident are you that you know your rights regarding which types of land you can freely access on foot or bicycle in Scotland?



Base: All (n=1501)

Overall, participants who took part in the deliberative research were aware of the extent of their rights to access land in Scotland. The ‘right to roam’ was mentioned unprompted and people felt they had the right to access most parts of the country unrestricted.

“I’m not 100% sure but I think we’re allowed to go pretty much anywhere.”

Urban interview participant

There was an acknowledgement that access rights came with the responsibility of behaving responsibly and respectfully, for example shutting gates¹¹ and walking around the edges of fields to cause minimal disruption.

“In my eyes, you can go on any land as long as you shut the gate behind you.”

Younger Rural interview participant

However, there was a concern raised that more signage was needed to avoid confusion. There was a view that, because people take it for granted that they can access any land in Scotland, it is even more important to make people aware of land that they are not supposed to access. One participant recounted that they had accidentally come across workmen when they were out horse-riding, because there were no signs to let people know.

“A couple of times I’ve seen the forestry guys when I was on horseback. Respectfully they stopped and let us pass to not spook the horses. That was kind of them but there should be more signs to let people know.”

Younger Urban group participant

¹¹ Participants frequently referred to the importance of shutting gates. While gates should be left as they are found (that is, gates found open should generally not be shut), there was no reason to think that participants meant other than shutting gates which they had opened behind them (although we did not explore this specific point).

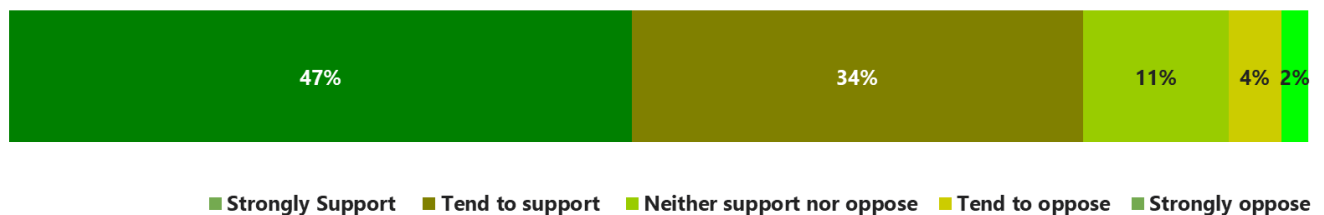
Views on statutory public access rights

Respondents were asked about their views on statutory public access rights. The following introductory text preceded the question:

'Everyone has the right to access most of Scotland's outdoors (excluding specific types of land such as that close to homes or schools), if they do so responsibly, with respect for people's property, and for the environment. These rights are sometimes referred to as 'right to roam'.'

Most respondents (81%) expressed support for the 'right to roam', while just 6% stated that they oppose it. Moreover, almost half of respondents (47%) said that they strongly support this right, while just 2% reported strongly opposing it. Levels of support for the 'right to roam' were highest among those who also support the diversification of land ownership (88%) compared with those who oppose it (57%).

Figure 7.2 To what extent do you support or oppose this right to roam?



Base: All (n=1501)

Generally, there was strong support across the deliberative groups for the current level of access rights in Scotland and the principle of the 'right to roam'. A more exceptional view was that it infringed upon the rights of landowners.

Reasons for support included valuing freedom and the idea of individuals being free to explore their country unrestricted. Access rights in Scotland were contrasted to what were perceived as the more restrictive rights in England, and participants described feeling fortunate to have such extensive access rights. There was a sense of pride among participants that Scotland had the right to roam, along with a sense of pride and a sense ownership over Scotland's land.

"It's more of a concept. It's about having the freedom to go anywhere in the country that you live in."

Urban interview participant

Participants were also supportive of the current access rights because of the positive effects on mental health from accessing the countryside.

However, there was an acknowledgment that this policy could have potential negative effects. People who thought current access rights went too far felt that it diminished the rights of landowners to protect and look after their land. One participant suggested that it meant landowners in Scotland did not own the land fully, and worried that it could deter investors from buying land in Scotland.

“People take their dog through places for wildlife and they have a right to roam but they shouldn’t. Scotland is a beautiful country, but we’ll lose it if you allow people to go anywhere.”

Older Rural group participant

Even among participants who were broadly supportive of the right to roam, there were concerns about people mistreating the land and disturbing animals. Participants described several examples of this, including visitors dropping litter, wild campers lighting irresponsible fires and dog walkers whose dogs worried sheep and other livestock. Among urban participants, there was an acknowledgment that they may not know enough about how to access rural land respectfully.

“I could drive out to the countryside and I don’t have the first clue about farming. I like to think I’m a careful person, but I could be doing things wrong.”

Urban interview participant

There was a view that these negative effects were exacerbated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has increased the amount of people visiting rural land. One participant suggested that access rights should be temporarily restricted, for example allowing farmers to lock gates during the lockdown.

There was a suggestion that more education and clear communication would give people a greater understanding and appreciation of the land, which would encourage them to look after it better.

“It would be beneficial if there was more open information. [...] People tend to act out more if they don’t know why there’s a fence in the way or a path blocked for maintenance.”

Younger Urban group participant

Participants also highlighted the importance of paths to help guide visitors and minimise disruption to wildlife. However, there was some concern that not everybody keeps to the paths.

Another general concern was safety of the people accessing the land who were not aware of potential hazards. Various dangers were associated with the right to roam,

including getting lost; dangerous weather conditions; contaminated land; or encountering aggressive animals.

There was a belief that more needs to be done to let people know which land is safe to access and which is not.

“I was walking in the Trossachs and there was a sign saying during these months stalking deer would be in progress. When we got to where I assume the stalking takes place there was a blank board and even after we got back it was really hard to find out more. They didn’t reply to communications about whether it was safe to walk in this valley.”

Younger Urban group participant

Even when there are signs around, they were not always perceived to be clear. There was a view that the general public will often not know what symbols on signs mean- especially foreign tourists.

“Often, they’ll put up one sign because they have to, but won’t tell you what it means. Sometimes there’s signage but often if you look it up, you’ll know but they don’t teach it at school and it’s different in different countries, so tourists won’t know. They might have heard you can walk anywhere in Scotland and could wander into a firing range or something.”

Younger Urban group participant

Experience of disagreements around access rights

Just 7% of survey respondents reported encountering an issue in the past 12 months where they thought they had the right to roam but someone else disagreed, while almost all (92%) had experienced no such issue. Those most likely to have encountered an issue were those living in remote rural areas (12% compared with 5% of those in large urban areas).

A few participants in the deliberative groups had experienced disputes with landowners. While this typically involved being told to get off the land by landowners, one participant described an incident where they were confronted by a gamekeeper with a rifle.

Among those who had not experienced a disagreement about access rights, there was some uncertainty about what they would do if their rights were challenged – as well as what landowners should do in the event of a dispute.

There were questions raised over the degree to which landowners must aid the right to roam by improving paths and removing barriers to accessing their land. Participants mentioned examples where they had not experienced direct conflict,

but landowners had made it difficult to access certain areas or failed to make them accessible to all. For example, one participant described a gate which walkers could get through, but those on horseback could not. This meant she was prevented from accessing the only path down to a beach when she was out riding. Another participant highlighted the extra needs of disabled people to access the land which are not always met:

“There’s a cycle path in south Edinburgh on the route towards Roslin, they recently put in these little blockade bars and you can’t get heavy e-bikes over them. It would be impossible for any non-standard bicycle, for example, one for people with disabilities, to use that path.”

Younger Urban group participant

8. Views on climate change and protecting wildlife

This section considers the extent to which climate change and protecting wildlife were seen as important factors to consider when making decisions about land use

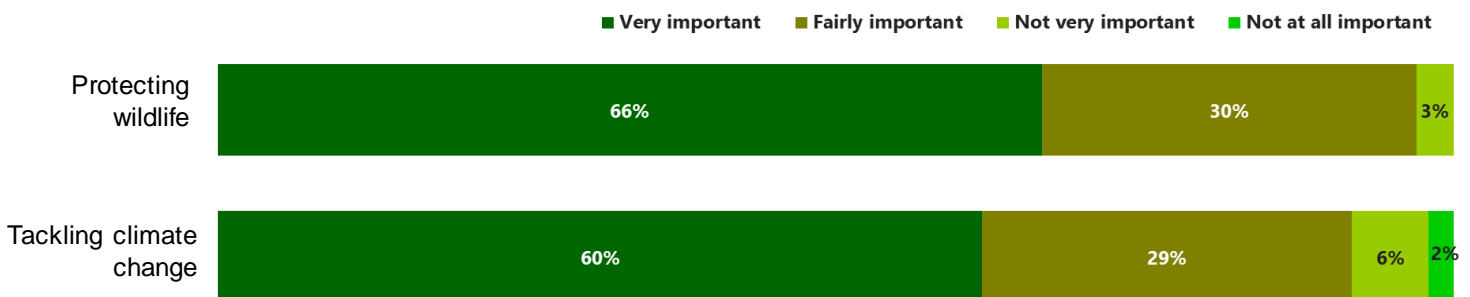
Main findings and implications

When asked specifically about how important it is to consider the protection of wildlife and climate change when making decisions about land use, there was high levels of concern about both (96% thought protecting wildlife should be an important factor and 89% thought tackling climate change should be an important factor).

However, this level of concern was not so apparent in the deliberative research. This is perhaps because, when thinking about specific aspects of land reform or of specific areas of land near them, people tend not to think of these issues. This suggests that, in engaging people about land use decisions in their area, people may need to be prompted to consider these aspects.

Respondents to the survey were asked specifically how important they felt protecting wildlife and tackling climate change should be as factors to consider when making decisions about land use.

Figure 8.1 Q How important do you think [tackling climate change/protecting wildlife] should be as a factor to consider when making decisions about land use?



Base: 1501 adults in Scotland aged 16+

Views on protecting wildlife

As shown in the figure above almost all respondents (96%) felt that protecting wildlife should be an important factor, while just 3% felt it was not very important.

- female respondents were considerably more likely than male respondents to say it was very important (72% compared with 59%).
- younger respondents (aged 16 to 34) were also more likely than older (55 and over) respondents to say this issue was very important (71% compared with 63%)

Views on climate change

Most respondents also felt that climate change should be an important factor to consider when making decisions about land use (89% overall).

Reflecting views on protecting wildlife, those more likely to say climate change should be an important factor to consider were:

- 16 to 34 year-olds (92% compared with 88% of those aged 35 and over)
- those in support of the diversification of land ownership (93% compared with 76% who oppose diversification)

Landowners' responsibility to the environment and the potential to use the land for renewable energy and rewilding were raised quite frequently in the deliberative research. However, the level of concern about climate change and protecting wildlife found in the survey was not so apparent.

This is perhaps because, when asked to think about those issues directly, people agree they are important – but when thinking about specific aspects of land reform, or of specific areas of land near them, people tend not to think of these issues. This may be because they are higher-level concerns and, in the case of climate change, seen as more of a more global concern. This suggests that, in engaging people about land use decisions in their area, people may need to be prompted to consider these aspects.

9. Engagement in decision-making

This section will first explore participants' previous experience in decision-making. It will then explore perceived views on the Scottish Government's policy in this area, participants' interest in future engagement and views on promoting wider engagement.

Main findings and implications

Only 13% of survey respondents indicated that they had previously been involved in decision making around land use (including decisions in towns and cities). Those in the most deprived areas were half as likely as others to have been involved – though they were just as interested in being involved in the future.

Those who had been involved in decision-making described mixed experiences. There was an indication that experiences were more empowering and rewarding when people were involved from an earlier stage of the process and had a say in what the land should be used for – rather than being involved at a later stage when a development had already been proposed (particularly if they were trying to prevent the development). This suggests that initiatives to encourage engagement should focus on early involvement in decisions about what land should be used for and on exploring the needs of the community.

There was support in principle for the Scottish Government's aim of promoting greater community involvement in decision making around land use.

A lack of awareness of how to get involved – as opposed to a lack of motivation – was the dominant explanation given by participants for not having been involved. Around two thirds indicated they would be interested in being more involved in the future. It was felt that opportunities to get involved should be publicised through a wide range of channels (local newspapers, social media, leaflets through doors). Similarly, it was agreed that there needed to be a multi-pronged approach to the engagement activities themselves including online methods, meetings, and 'knocking on doors' or engaging people when they are out and about in the community.

Publicising examples of successful community projects elsewhere was seen as important (and was something that was raised when examples were shown).

Prior engagement in decision-making

Survey respondents were asked whether they had previously been involved in any decision-making around land use, including in cities or towns as well as the countryside. Overall, 13% of respondents had been involved while 85% had not. Those most likely to have been involved included:

- those living in accessible rural areas (26%) and remote rural areas (22%), compared with just 11% of those in large urban areas
- those who oppose both statutory access rights (22%) and diversification of land ownership (22%), compared with 12% and 13% respectively of those who support these policies
- those with a degree or equivalent (15% compared with 8% of those with no formal qualifications and 10% with a school or college qualification)
- those in less deprived areas- those in the most deprived areas (SIMD 1) were only half as likely as those in other areas to have been involved (7% compared with 13% overall)

Experiences of prior involvement in decision making

There were mixed experiences of involvement among participants in the deliberative research. However, interpretation of 'involvement' seemed to vary, with several participants initially reporting no involvement but later referencing past experiences (for example, in opposing planning applications) – perhaps initially dismissing these experiences due to their perceived lack of influence over the outcome.

The decision-making processes participants spoke about were diverse. They varied in terms of issues, including access, use and ownership of land. They also covered many different types of land including both built-on land (schools, housing, car parks and community buildings) and land that had not been built on (tracks and paths, greenspace, and forestry among others).

Experiences of engagement also varied from those who felt their engagement was a positive experience (generally they have been involved from an early stage), to those who were disillusioned and frustrated by the process. Both groups, however, remarked upon the time and energy consuming nature of their engagement.

Among those who had a positive experience, they had found the process empowering and rewarding. It was empowering because they felt they and others had been listened to throughout the process and their views taken into account. It was rewarding because of the sense of satisfaction they felt when they saw the final outcome after a lengthy process of involvement.

“I went to a lot of meetings...it was very good – everybody got a say and was listened to. Everybody brought up good points and it was put to a vote – the outcome was the best thing that could be done.”

Older Urban interview participant

“It felt like hard work, what felt good was obviously the reward after. Just imagine a piece of green space completely overgrown, rubbish dumped there, years of writing letters, getting permission, getting things cleaned up. Final result, you kind of forget the pain, it feels great afterwards.”

Low awareness on land reform group participant

Those who felt it was a negative experience were disillusioned and frustrated by being ignored during the consultation or discovering a decision had already been made beforehand. Some described what they perceived as an ‘undemocratic’ system, whereby developers’ money tended to overturn the views of local people. Others felt the small numbers of committee members making these decisions did not represent local authority areas well.

“It was a very negative experience – it was a foregone conclusion before you could actually ask any questions, learn anything, and make decisions. I attempted to attend a community council meeting to voice concerns about a development process [building houses on the edge of the village] and hear what the process is. I got to the meeting and found out the decision’s been made before anybody’s been allowed to make any comments and half the [planning] committee weren’t there. The whole community were outraged but only four of us turned up to find out that the decision’s already been made, deal’s already been signed.”

Previously involved in land use decision-making group participant

“I may be wrong, but locals don’t have a voice. Councillors decide – 11 people on the committee for the whole local authority.”

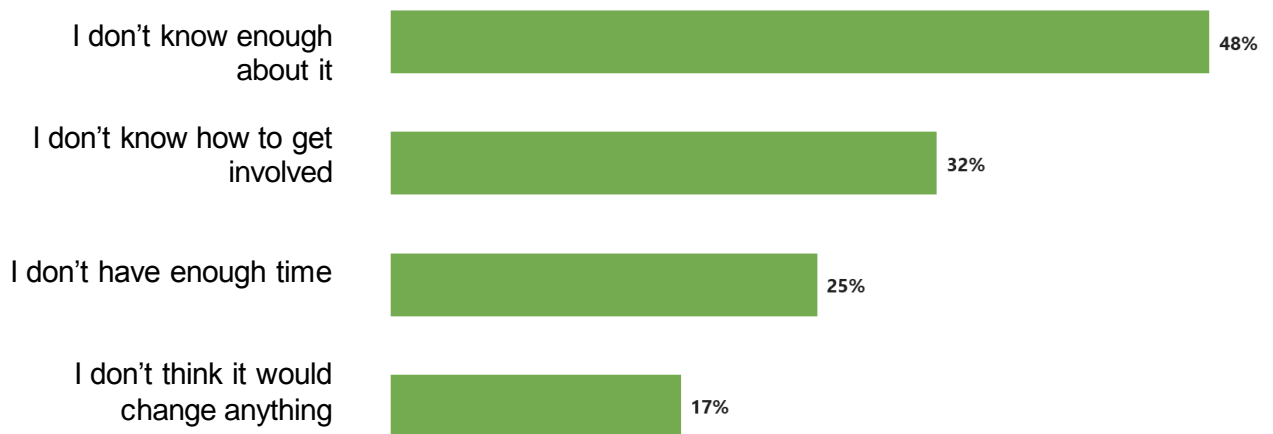
Mixed group participant

Among this group, frustration was also expressed in relation to processes, structures and timescales of involvement. Shortages of funding to support local communities’ interests, as well as low numbers of people involved were also identified as drawbacks.

Barriers to involvement in decision-making

Survey respondents were asked to give up to three reasons from a list of options, which were stopping them from becoming more involved in decision-making about land use. The most common barriers were not knowing enough about it (48%), not knowing how to get involved (32%), not having enough time (25%) and not thinking their involvement would change anything (17%).

Figure 9.1 Q What are the main reasons stopping you from becoming more involved in decision making about land use in your area?



Base: 1501 adults in Scotland aged 16+

These barriers were reflected in the deliberative research among participants who not been previously involved in decision making. Again, a lack of awareness of ways to get involved, as opposed to a lack of motivation, was the dominant explanation given by these participants, with many under the impression either that there had been no such opportunities in their area, or that these had been poorly publicised. It was felt that to reach a bigger audience, publicity should be widened, using a broader range of communication channels including social media, as well as traditional media such as local newspapers.

“I would definitely be interested, but how?”

Younger Rural group participant

“Haven't had the opportunity that I'm aware of. If you don't have issues around you, you probably wouldn't be involved.”

Older Urban group participant

“No opportunity, or not aware [of it]. A lot of consultation is in a local paper, people don't buy papers anymore. Unless it's on Tik Tok they don't read it. So those sort of things pass you by.”

Low awareness on land reform group participant

Other participants who were aware of opportunities had been deterred from involvement by doubt and scepticism as to whether they would have any real influence on the outcome, echoing those who reported negative experiences of feeling powerless in the process.

“There’s a feeling of “What’s the point?” if you’re going to be in a fight and lose it.”

Mixed group participant

Reactions to Scottish Government policy on community engagement

Participants in the deliberative research were provided with some information about the Scottish Government’s agenda around community involvement in decision making. There was support in principle of the Scottish Government’s aim to encourage greater community engagement in decision making around land use, with the deliberative research participants consistently describing it as a ‘good’ or ‘great’ idea.

However, many voiced reservations as to how well it would work in practice, without additional measures in place. Scepticism was expressed about the number of people that would invest time in being involved, even with greater awareness, and doubts were raised about how to ensure engagement processes would be representative of local populations. One view was expressed that ‘encouragement’ was simply not enough to motivate widespread involvement.

“It’s difficult getting bums on seats – people can be very lax and don’t realise how much decisions are going to affect them.”

Older Urban interview participant

“Encouragement is a bit wishy washy. If you don’t [engage] nothing is done. I’m not sure it goes far enough – it’s not ambitious enough.”

Mixed group participant

“It’s all well and good saying we need more community involvement but there must be a way of measuring that – if 10 people from a community are involved that’s not representative.”

Younger Rural group participant

Limitations in terms of people’s free time, resources and expertise were also identified as barriers to engagement, especially in relation to more complex legal or technical decisions.

“Somebody who's just come in from work, got the kids fed, there needs to be some help there because it's not simple stuff. It is difficult to throw yourself into things when you have other commitments. The policy needs to be coupled with expertise or financial assistance to make sure there's funding in place to make things work properly.”

Previously involved in land use decision-making group participant

A degree of concern was expressed that greater community involvement could risk promoting ‘Nimbyism’¹², and hugely slowing decision making processes at the expense of benefits to the country as a whole.

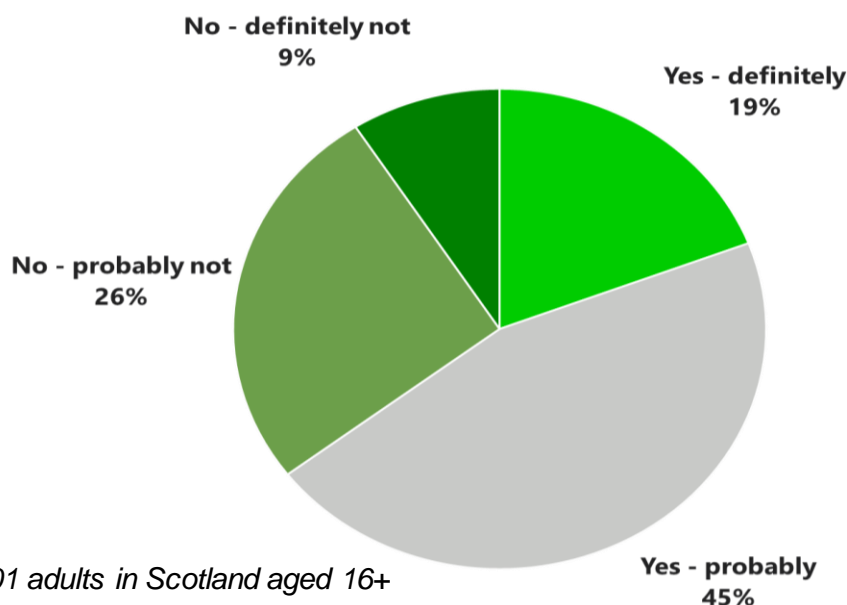
“There is danger of Nimbyism and if we are trying to grow an economy then it really slows things down if every community gets chance to say no.”

Mixed group participant

Interest in greater future involvement

Around two thirds (64%) of survey respondents said they would ‘definitely’ or ‘probably’ be interested in being more involved in decision-making around land, planning and development in the future, while one third (35%) said they would ‘probably’ or ‘definitely not’ be interested.

Figure 9.2 Q Would you be interested in being more involved in decision-making about land and planning/developments in your area in the future?



¹² Acronym for “Not in my back yard” and often used to characterise people’s objections to developments in their local area that they would be happy to see elsewhere

There were higher levels of interest in younger participants aged 16 to 34 (70%) and 35 to 54 (69%) than those aged 55 and over (55%). There was also a notable difference between those with no formal education (32% expressed interest) and those with either a college qualification (61% expressed interest) or a university degree or equivalent (71% expressed interest).

However, those in SIMD 1 areas were equally as likely as those in less deprived areas to say they would be interested in being involved in future (64%), despite being half as likely to have been previously involved.

There were mixed attitudes in the deliberative research regarding greater future involvement in decision-making. Reflecting the concerns expressed in relation to previous engagement and Scottish Government policy, participants generally expressed an interest in greater future involvement on the condition that they would feel listened to and be able to make a difference. On the whole, participants said they would be more likely to get involved if they opposed a proposal than if they supported it.

Others expressed uncertainty about whether they would get involved, based on a lack of confidence in their knowledge.

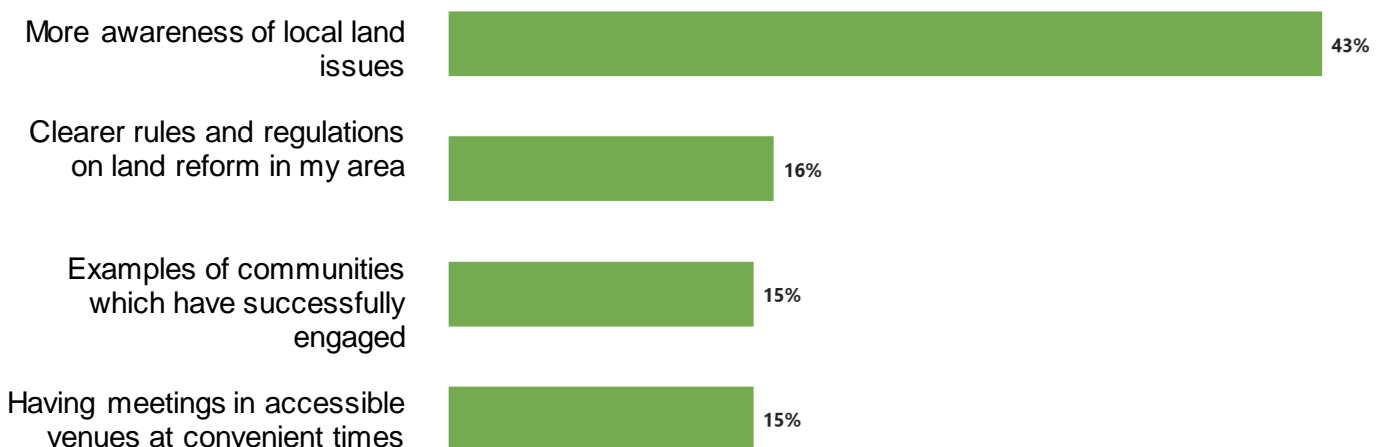
“I think even after all this I wouldn’t input into community input because I don’t have a full opinion on this, this is why I vote in local council elections, they know more than me.”

Younger Urban group participant

Encouraging greater engagement

Respondents were asked what they felt would encourage greater engagement in their area and were given four options to choose from. By far the most common response was ‘more awareness of local land issues’ (43%).

Figure 9.3 Q What would be most helpful in encouraging greater community engagement in land decision making in your area?



Across the deliberative research, people consistently argued that raising awareness of opportunities for community involvement was very important and it was felt this could be achieved through teaching in schools, and sharing experiences from other communities more widely through the media. Accessibility was also a strong theme, in terms of time and location. It was felt more would need to be done to 'sell' engagement processes to the wider public, both in terms of the relevance of such decisions to their lives and the effect of their input on the outcome.

A wide range of further ways to encourage engagement, including among younger people, were suggested in the deliberative research including:

- having a "fun" element to it or some kind of incentive – "Wine, free sandwiches!"
- using social media channels and a website for publicity
- communicating involvement as being in people's interest - "There's something in it for them"
- taking it to the community – "Knocking on doors, community groups"
- financial incentives

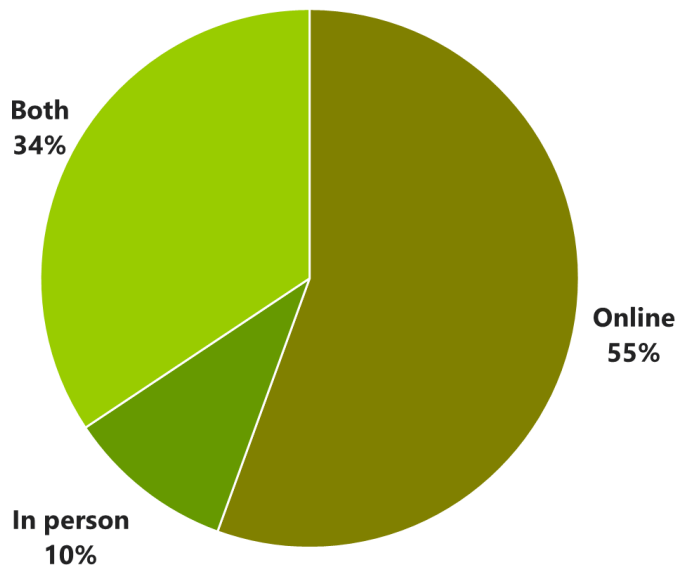
"Having a reward that's not just a good feeling could be good for younger people. Some people will just do it, whereas others ask what will I get out of it? I think people need to know how certain situations affect them even if they think it doesn't. A lot of the time you don't want to get involved if you think something doesn't affect you personally."

Younger Urban group participant

Preferred means of engagement

Online engagement was the preferred method for those who said they would be interested in greater future engagement in decision-making around land, planning and developments in their area. Just over half of respondents (55%) selected this as their preferred means of engagement with 34% happy to be involved both online or face to face, and just 10% expressing a preference for in-person engagement only. Those aged 55 and over were more likely than those aged 16 to 54 to prefer in-person engagement only (16% compared with 7%).

Figure 9.4 Q And would you prefer to be involved online, in person or both?



Base: Those keen to be more involved in future engagement in decision-making (n=952)

No single method of engagement was unanimously preferred in the deliberative research, and it was felt there was a need for a multi-pronged approach encompassing meetings and leaflets through people’s doors alongside social media and online engagement to reach all groups of people.

It was suggested that the societal changes resulting from the COVID-19 lockdown might make future engagement online easier in future.

10. Conclusions and implications

The research revealed that the public have a strong sense of pride in Scotland's land and an awareness of the wide range of ways in which the land benefits individuals and the country as a whole. They are also aware of some of the challenges and potential trade-offs which need to be made when making decisions about land use.

There is low awareness of the Scottish Government's land reform agenda as a whole (though slightly more awareness of some specific aspects such as CRtB and access rights). However, once explained to participants, there is considerable support for the overall aims and for specific policies on diversification of land ownership, vacant and derelict land, access rights and community involvement in decision-making. Concerns tended to relate to elements of implementation rather than the policies themselves. These included:

- a view that, while current access rights probably strike the right balance, more should be done to educate the public about their responsibilities, there should be more clarity about landowners' responsibilities in respect of allowing easy access, and there should be guidance on what to do in the event of a dispute
- a concern that communities may lack the resources and expertise to manage assets, and may be susceptible to volunteer fatigue in the longer term and therefore that support should be provided
- a concern about the relative cost-benefits of large-scale buyouts (including as land values rise). This was related by some directly to value for money in terms of the number of people likely to benefit. It also highlights the issue of rising land values as a future challenge not just in economic but also social terms

There is an evident appetite among the public for greater involvement in decisions about land use. Initiatives to encourage this should tap into the pride that is felt in Scotland's land, but also the concerns about vacant and derelict land, about the lack of community facilities and about land not being used to benefit local communities.

The term 'land reform' is perceived as somewhat unclear and is associated with undeveloped, rural land. It is not connected with tangible issues and initiatives that affect people. This has implications for how land reform is positioned: a greater emphasis on the urban elements (both urban greenspace and buildings), and buildings in rural towns and villages, may help engage more of the public and help them see the relevance of land reform to their own lives. Examples of successful community buy-outs (particularly urban examples) and repurposing of vacant and derelict land should be publicised.

There should also be a focus on encouraging early involvement in decisions about how land should be used. More fundamentally perhaps, the experiences of

members of the public involved decision-making, suggest a need to consider the structures and processes within which communities can engage to meaningfully affect decisions (particularly in urban areas).

A multi-pronged approach is required both to raise awareness of opportunities for involvement (for example, through local newspapers, social media, leaflets through doors) and for the engagement activities themselves (including online methods, meetings, and 'knocking on doors' or engaging people when they are out and about in the community).

The findings demonstrate that, although people in the most deprived areas are less likely to have been involved in decisions, they show a similar level of interest in being involved in the future. They are also more likely to be affected by vacant and derelict land in their area. This suggests a need to prioritise and support engagement activities in these areas.

Annex 1: Evidence Review and Expert Interviews

This evidence review explores what is already known about public attitudes towards land reform in Scotland. Although there has been limited research specifically on this topic, some publications have considered how land reform is relevant to different sectors of society in different parts of the country. The findings of the review will be used to shape the questions posed to participants in the national survey and deliberative workshops.

The review begins with some background to contemporary land reform in Scotland (for a more detailed history of Scottish land reform and the associated legislation and policies, see Combe et al. 2020 and/or the recent SPICe 2019 briefing on the topic). Next, the main themes of land reform are discussed to provide some boundaries for the types of topics that will be considered in the later parts of the project.

Finally, insights are drawn from recent work that has considered public understanding of these themes, as well as public perspectives in relation to land use more generally. The review also collates the views of eight experts who have professional experience and understanding of public attitudes to land reform. These experts were asked to discuss the range of public attitudes towards land reform policies, as well as how prevalent different attitudes are in different places and in different types of communities.

Contemporary land reform in Scotland and the 2003 Act

It is widely accepted that Scotland has the most concentrated pattern of private land ownership in Europe (see for example, Lorimer 2000; Wightman 2013) due to several historic factors, such as feudalism, succession laws, fiscal policies, and agricultural support (Thomson et al. 2016). During the first half of the 20th century, significant areas of land were acquired into public ownership and the number of owner-occupied farms increased in some lowland areas (Land Reform Review Group 2014). Recent decades have seen further incremental shifts, including increased ownership by environmental charities and a number of community 'buyouts' of private estates (Mackenzie 2012; McMorran et al. 2014). Nevertheless, over the last 40 years, the proportion of public, as compared to private land ownership, has remained similar and the dominance of large-scale private ownership that has perpetuated over several centuries is a central focus of contemporary debate (Wightman 2013; Combe 2018).

The Land Reform Policy Group (LRPG), established by the Scottish Office in 1997, concluded that the existing system of land ownership was inhibiting development in rural communities and causing natural heritage degradation as a result of poor land management (LRPG 1998). This led to the adoption of the core objective of contemporary Scottish land reform policy: "to remove the land-based barriers to the

sustainable development of rural communities” (LRPG 1998). This could only be achieved through: a) increasing diversity in land ownership – between private, public, partnership, not-for-profit and community sectors; and b) increasing community involvement in local decision-making about how land is owned and managed (LRPG 1998).

Following these early reviews, the first step in the contemporary land reform process was the Abolition of Feudal Tenure etc. (Scotland) Act 2000, which removed the centuries-old system of feudal tenure. Following devolution and the re-establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, momentum for land reform increased. The Scottish Land Fund was established in 2001, providing financial resources to communities to support land purchase.

Building on these initial developments, the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 introduced three main measures:

- a statutory right of responsible (non-motorised) access over most land
- a community (pre-emptive) ‘right to buy’ which gave eligible community bodies the right to register an interest in rural (settlements of less than 10,000 people) land and the opportunity to buy that land when it comes up for sale
- the crofting community right to buy, whereby crofting community bodies may register an interest in land and purchase that land (regardless of whether the owner wishes to sell), subject to approval by Scottish Ministers.

In practice, uptake of both the Community Right to Buy and Crofting Right to Buy, and conversion of applications into full community acquisitions, has been limited. By 2018, just 22 (13%) of the 174 community bodies which had applied to register an interest¹³ in land under the Community Right to Buy had successfully acquired the land or asset, with only two crofting communities having submitted applications under the Crofting Right to Buy over the same period (Scottish Government, 2015). The number of applications has increased slightly since 2015, perhaps influenced by increased funding availability and greater public awareness of land reform generally (McMorran et al. 2018). Critically, the 2003 Act is considered to have had additional indirect impacts, motivating community buyouts which occurred through negotiation without recourse to legislative measures and enabling a power shift away from private landowners towards communities (Macleod et al. 2010; Warren and McKee 2011).

¹³ In total, 174 community bodies had completed an application to register an interest by 2014. 116 of these subsequently achieved a successful registration, 39 of which expired or were deleted. The 22 successful purchases by 2014 also included some acquisitions that were completed outwith the 2003 Act’s legislative measures.

The 2014 land reform review and the 2016 Act

Recognising a loss of momentum in land reform, the Scottish Government established the Land Reform Review Group (LRRG) in 2012¹⁴, with the aim of ‘generating innovative and radical proposals on land reform that will contribute to the success of Scotland for future generations’. The group’s remit noted that:

“The relationship between the land and the people of Scotland is fundamental to the wellbeing, economic success, environmental sustainability and social justice of the country. The structure of land ownership is a defining factor in that relationship: it can facilitate and promote development, but it can also hinder it.”

The report set out a series of recommendations, including increasing community input to land use decision-making, increasing transparency around controlling interests in land, and the development of measures to reduce the concentrated pattern of private land ownership. The review also identified a need for a greater focus on urban areas in relation to land reform, recommending that the support provided to communities in the Highlands and Islands should be made available to communities across Scotland. It was also recommended that the Scottish Government should take a more integrated and focused approach to supporting local community land ownership.

The Scottish Ministers responded to the Group’s recommendations by establishing a working group for increasing community land ownership and developing legislation: the Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015 and the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 contained amendments to simplify the Community Right to Buy process. It also established measures to support community bodies through the ownership or control of land and buildings (Asset Transfer), and to ensure their voices are heard in decisions about public services.¹⁵

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 represents a major step for land reform in Scotland and the culmination of decades of debate and inquiry. The 2016 Act incorporates a range of inter-related provisions including:

- a requirement for development of a Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement¹⁶ (LRRS) (published in 2017) to improve the relationship between the land and people of Scotland, where rights and responsibilities in relation to land are fully recognised and fulfilled

¹⁴ The House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee also conducted an Inquiry into land reform in Scotland in 2014-15. See: <https://www.parliament.uk/land-reform-inquiry>.

¹⁵ See: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/community-empowerment-scotland-act-summary/>

¹⁶ A Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement was published by Scottish Government in September 2017: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-land-rights-responsibilities-statement/>

- establishment of the Scottish Land Commission¹⁷ to review the effectiveness and impact of current and potential future laws and policies relating to land
- powers for Scottish Ministers to provide for the disclosure of information about controlling interests in land and the establishment of a public Register of Controlling Interests in land¹⁸
- development of Guidance on Engaging Communities in Decisions relating to land (published in 2018) to support landowners/managers engaging constructively with communities
- a new Right to Buy to Further Sustainable Development which follows the new Right to Buy Abandoned, Neglected and Detrimental Land
- additional measures relating to sporting land management (including provision for sporting rates), access and agricultural holdings and changes in use of common good land.

Collectively, these measures have increased support for implementing and developing land reform legislation, reinforcing a fundamental shift in the balance of power between communities and landowners.

Land reform policy themes

Land reform is “a broad concept and is considered to include measures which modify or change the management, use and possession of land in the public interest” (SPICe 2019). Unlike in other countries where land reform measures focus on the individual or tenant, the emphasis in Scotland is on the community and the role that land plays in supporting communities (Hoffman 2013). The community’s right to buy land and assets is the main legislative mechanism for enabling community ownership in Scotland (although many buyouts occur outwith the legislation, as described above). However, land reform is “no longer totally synonymous with community ownership” and a broad range of themes exist (SPICe 2019).

These themes are diverse and include: community ownership and management of assets, vacant and derelict land, housing, human rights, agricultural land, public access, property law, transparency of ownership, landowner rights and responsibilities, and community engagement. Public interests and the role of communities feature strongly in relation to all of these themes, with Scottish land

¹⁷ The Scottish Land Commission was subsequently established in 2017: <https://landcommission.gov.scot/>

¹⁸ As part of this, Registers of Scotland launched ScotLIS (Scotland’s Land Information Service) in 2017, a new map-based, online land information service on land ownership, with Registers of Scotland agreed to completing the Land Register by 2024.

policy increasingly rooted in concerns about fairness, equality and the fulfilment of human rights (Peacock 2018).

In parallel with land reform legislation, the Scottish Government's Land Use Strategy (2016-2021)¹⁹ contains objectives to better connect urban and rural communities with the land and to "identify and publicise effective ways for communities to contribute to land use debates and decision-making". These measures place increasing pressure on all landowners to ensure sustainable land management and to involve and support communities with respect to land use decision-making processes.

There is also growing awareness that rural and urban land use are strongly linked to the role that communities will play in mitigating climate change,²⁰ and that communities need to be able to participate in the development and implementation of nature conservation and landscape policy.²¹

The Scottish Government supports land reform to diversify land ownership in Scotland.²² From community to conservation ownership, a more balanced mixed economy is envisioned for the future. Underpinning this are competing priorities, from environmental and climate change concerns, renewable energy and forestry, sustainable development and community empowerment. Contemporary land reform is therefore a means to wider ends. The historical thrust of much of the land reform debate, however, has been around an end in itself - to break the private 'monopoly' of much of Scottish land ownership as a principle.

From a societal perspective, the LRRS and the Guidance on engaging communities in decisions related to land (Scottish Government 2018a) recognise and emphasise the importance of engaging communities in land use decision-making. Following the declaration by the First Minister in 2019 of a climate emergency, the involvement of the public in decisions around land use are likely to be of continually increasing importance.

Public understanding and experience of land reform

Current levels of awareness, understanding and appetite for land reform among the general public in Scotland are largely unknown, particularly beyond those groups with a specific interest in land reform (for example, landowners, landowning bodies, land managers etc.). In 2010, land ownership was found not to be a "top-of-mind issue" for the general public (George Street Research 2010), although the

¹⁹ See Scotland's Land Use Strategy 2016-2021: <https://www2.gov.scot/landusestrategy>

²⁰ For example, in Scotland's Land Use Strategy and the recent Programme for Government commitment to develop Regional Land Use Plan

²¹ See '[Community Empowerment and Sustainable Landscapes](#)', Calum Macleod, November 5 2019.

²² See: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/land-reform/>

broadening of land reform policy and the recent legislation, as outlined in the previous section, may have increased public awareness.

The rationale for the current land reform agenda in Scotland is increasingly centred in themes of fairness, rights and responsibilities, community engagement and economic growth. These are themes with universal application, and therefore relevance, to the Scottish public. Land reform legislation represents a relatively complex field, with awareness of the specifics of legislative measures potentially low among the general public. However, the broader themes of contemporary land reform outlined above are important to all and are often likely to feature in the public's consciousness in relation to current day politics.

In relation to human rights, the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 uses the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) as a guiding framework. Shields (2018) explains that the ICESCR approach encourages land to be “unlocked” in the pursuit of human rights. In Scotland, this translates to increased attention being paid to the balance between the right to property, and economic, social, and cultural rights. For example, this is particularly relevant to the redevelopment of vacant and derelict land because, as Shields explains, using vacant land to create space for affordable homes can progress people's right to housing. Similarly, using this type of land to create community greenspaces or other public goods can progress people's rights to food and health.

Until recently, there has been a lack of research on the impacts of vacant and derelict land on communities. The most recent Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey recorded 11,037 hectares of derelict and urban vacant land in Scotland in 2018 (a 6% decrease from 2017) (Scottish Government 2018b). Much of this land has been vacant or derelict for more than 20 years, and has been found to have a disproportionate effect on disadvantaged communities. 58% of people living in the most deprived decile in Scotland are estimated to live within 500m of derelict land, compared to 11% in the least deprived decile.

In 2019, Peter Brett Associates led a team of researchers who identified data sources to profile health, environment, economic and community impacts related to vacant and derelict land. They also carried out stakeholder engagement to examine the harmful effects of vacant and derelict land on communities across a wide range of sites. The research revealed a range of negative impacts, including: poorer health outcomes, population health and life expectancy; negative impacts on community wellbeing; environmental pollution related to contaminated sites; and, the loss of vacant and derelict sites that had previously been used as greenspaces (Peter Brett Associates 2019).

The work published by the Scottish Land Commission in 2019 was also an important step towards understanding the experiences of members of the public

who live and work in areas with large-scale and concentrated land ownership²³ (Glenn et al. 2019). Acknowledging Principle 2 of the LRRS (that there should be a more diverse pattern of land ownership and tenure), the research looked specifically at rural Scotland, where large-scale landholdings are common. Hindle et al. (2014) estimate that 1,125 owners hold 4.1 million hectares (70% of Scotland's rural land).

Following the public call for evidence, the research received responses from more than 400 people. The responses revealed a range of public perspectives and experiences related to the benefits and disadvantages of land being owned by a small number of people. Most frequently, respondents identified issues related to the link between how land is owned and the ability of rural communities to realise their economic potential. Other themes included the link between land ownership and local housing needs, community cohesion, the natural environment, agriculture and land management. In relation to local housing needs, depopulation remains an important issue for many rural communities, and this has also acted as a main driver for community ownership of land and assets. Overall, most of the disadvantages noted by those submitting evidence to the Scottish Land Commission's research were related to the concentration of power of land use decisions (and parallels with monopoly power in wider economic policy), rather than related to the size of landholdings. Based on this work the Scottish Land Commission (2019) made recommendations to Scottish Ministers which include the need for new statutory mechanisms to address the issues identified in the research.

Communities and land use decision-making

The LRRS sets out a vision for “a strong and dynamic relationship” between Scotland's land and people (Scottish Government, 2017). To realise that vision, Principle 6 of the LRRS calls for “greater collaboration and community engagement in decisions about land”.

Scotland's Regeneration Forum (SURF) recently held workshops with community members in Govan, East Kirkcaldy and Rothesay to discuss how the Scottish Land Commission's guidance and protocol on community engagement in land use decision-making²⁴ ‘fits’ with their daily lived experiences. While there was general awareness among participants of the need for cohesive, place-based policies and bottom-up governance, planning and ownership issues are largely viewed as “unclear and complicated” (SURF, n.d. p.5). There was also agreement that encouraging land owners and managers to engage with ‘the community’ is not simple, particularly in urban communities. A conclusion of this work is the

²³ The Land Reform Review Group (2014) noted that “a relatively small number of landowners with large properties own the majority of Scotland's land area” (p.159).

²⁴ See ‘[Community Engagement](#)’ on the Scottish Land Commission website for all community engagement resources.

acknowledgement that many of the difficulties experienced by communities in relation to land result from “genuine misunderstandings and confusion about existing protocols, rights and responsibilities and, crucially, mistaken assumptions about what others needed and/or wanted” (p.6).

A lack of knowledge about how decisions are made about urban land and buildings was also noted by Young Scot (2019)²⁵. Their survey focused on young people’s perceptions of the urban built environment they live in, as well as whether they feel they can have an impact on land use decision-making. The survey found that 62% had little or no knowledge about how decisions are made, particularly in relation to who owns derelict land and buildings. There was also confusion regarding why these sites remain stagnant for so long. Only 9.4% felt they had some say in how land and buildings in their town or city are used. Young people’s perceptions of housing in urban areas was often negative, with responses highlighting poor quality and unaffordable housing, as well as a sense of disempowerment and a loss of greenspaces to new developments. Respondents wanted urban areas to offer more ‘creative spaces’ (67%) and access to growing spaces (55%). Half of the respondents were aware of the community right to buy land and buildings in urban areas. Just under half were aware that communities can request to lease, own or have other rights over publicly owned buildings and land. There was little awareness of Common Good property, with only 14% understanding the term.

Recent work by Brown and Leibowitz (2019) also found confusion about the status of Common Good land and assets, and Common Good Funds in Scotland, due to issues such as poor record-keeping, financial mismanagement and legal imprecision. Combined, these factors have led to inadequate knowledge among Scottish citizens and local authorities about the existence of Common Good land and assets, and how to make the most of them in the public interest. However, more thought has been placed on how the Common Good can be updated in the future, as a result of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.²⁶ The general public’s awareness of the existence of Common Good land and assets remains unclear, as does their understanding of what a modern, progressive form of Common Good should look like.²⁷

²⁵ Despite being widely shared online, the Young Scot survey received 197 responses, which the research team felt was low and perhaps reflects lower levels of interest/engagement with this topic in general among young people aged 11-25.

²⁶ Part 8 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 instructed local authorities to establish Common Good registers and publish details about any proposed disposal of Common Good land and assets.

²⁷ The Land Reform Review Group (2014) noted the importance of Common Good land and assets such as some town halls, parks and woodland in Scotland and how these have been gradually degraded/lost.

Public attitudes to land use in general

A Scottish Government study on citizens' forums, attitudes to agriculture, environment and rural priorities (Diffley et al. 2019) asked participants to identify principles they believed underpin the agricultural sector in Scotland. Participants identified: healthy and productive use of land, protecting ensuring high quality food production, progressing environmental protection, and ensuring financial assistance is based on greatest need as the most important principles. The participants noted that Scottish farming was fundamental to maintaining the Scottish economy and provides a public service (for example, through provision of locally sourced foods). The need to maintain the health and productivity of the land was also noted, and for this to be supported through policy developments. There was some indication that participants were keen to see a transition towards increased levels of fruit and vegetable production, balanced with reduced meat production, following increased awareness of animal welfare and environmental sustainability issues.

The results of the citizens' forums study showed a general awareness of the need for environmental protection and ecological diversity, although this was more apparent from those under the age of 35 than those over 35. The participants indicated that they would welcome enhanced cooperation between land owners to balance productive and unproductive land uses and preserve ecosystems. There was support for funding allocation which enhances environmental goals and supports smaller farms. In rural areas, there was a slightly heightened awareness of the connectivity between agriculture and the environment, although this awareness was generally low overall. The participants recognised the role of farmers working on poorer quality land and the wider socio-economic benefits they bring, for example, acting as employment anchors within an area. As such, they supported specific allocation of funding for farms in this group.

Much of the literature concerned with attitudes towards land use focuses on public access to outdoor space. Swanwick (2009) notes that we can observe attitudes to the land through observation of behaviour and patterns of (landscape) consumption, as well as understanding individuals' values. She suggests that as a society, we are aware of the benefits that we reap from green spaces, community gardens, national parks, etc., and as such, value their preservation.

McVey et al. (2018) also identified that the public values the social and wellbeing benefits of engaging with community gardens (including neighbourly engagement, leisure, social support, community health, connectedness and diversity, empowerment, sanctuary, place attachment) (also see Kingsley et al. 2009). In pursuit of environmental justice, some groups are organising themselves to make available more opportunities for these benefits (McVey et al. 2018). Similar perceptions of benefits were identified in a study by van der Jagt and Lawrence (2019), on urban forests. However, in this study, concerns over tree safety and the responsibility of local authorities to manage and maintain such land uses were also identified. The authors highlight the difficulties that local authorities have in providing such maintenance and how this may conflict with public desire to have access to these spaces.

Some studies have highlighted uncertainty and concern among the public regarding changes in land use which may diminish their opportunities for outdoor access. McVey et al. (2018) reported feelings of anxiety among participants in relation to impacts of land reform and unequal access to land in Scotland. They noted that they felt community gardens and allotments in Scotland were perceived by councils and governments as barriers to new development and that eventually the planning system would overrule their right to access the land. Pacione (2019) reported strong opposition to housing developments in Scotland, with the primary motivator being disagreement with the development's incursion on to greenbelt land. Other important reasons included loss of open space and impacts on facilities, infrastructure and culture.

The central message in the studies which highlight concern around land use change was a feeling of helplessness in the face of planning and development. In both cases presented above, the participants were fearful of losing access to land and being overruled by authorities. To complement this, Revell and Dinnie (2018) note a sense of disenfranchisement in the Scottish public resulting from a disconnection from the land and decision-making processes around land use. They identify that issues around local democracy, land ownership, land prices and land-use planning are necessary for emboldening communities and supporting action and engagement on the topic of land use. Although there are a number of studies on attitudes towards green spaces, they tend to focus on the urban or suburban population (for example, McVey et al. 2018; Pacione 2019) or are international in scope (for example, Bonaiuto et al. 2002; Ives and Kendal 2013). Therefore, more could be done to understand public attitudes to greenspace in rural areas and towards other forms of rural land use, for example commercial forestry, agriculture, private ownership, etc., specifically in the Scottish context.

Summary concluding points

The initial themes evident from this review can be summarised as:

1. The recent policy momentum and related initiatives in Scotland (for example, the development of the Scottish Land Commission) have increased the profile of land reform as a government agenda in Scotland. This may have increased public awareness around land reform.
2. Collectively, the raft of recent policy and wider measures have increased support for implementing and developing land reform legislation, reinforcing a fundamental shift in the balance of power between communities and landowners.
3. Land reform legislation and wider measures including the Land Use Strategy and LRRS have placed increasing pressure on landowners to involve communities with respect to land use decision-making processes. Local communities and the general public are therefore increasingly central to the land reform process.
4. As an agenda, land reform has broadened in scope to include a wide range of activities, with the rationale for further land reform focused on themes of

fairness, rights and responsibilities, community engagement and economic growth. These themes have universal application and are therefore of considerable relevance and interest to the Scottish public. Nevertheless, levels of awareness, understanding and appetite for land reform among the public are largely unknown, particularly beyond those stakeholders more directly involved with the land.

5. Based on recent consultations relating to land reform and land use, the general public frequently identify concerns relating to the link between how land is owned and the ability of rural communities to realise their economic potential; and concerns around local housing needs and depopulation, maintaining community cohesion, the natural environment, agriculture and land management.
6. An important additional concern among the general public relating to land and landownership relates to concern around loss of access to areas due to planning and development and a sense of disempowerment in the Scottish public resulting from a disconnection from the land and decision-making processes around land use.
7. Land ownership and planning related issues are often perceived by the general public as complex and lacking clarity, with engagement between landowners and communities often challenging in practice, particularly in urban communities. As well as the broader challenges for communities and the general public identified above, additional challenges can result from misunderstandings and confusion about existing protocols, rights and responsibilities, mistaken assumptions about what others needed and/or wanted and low awareness about how decisions are being made in relation to land and other assets. These issues can occur in both rural and urban contexts and particularly in relation to who owns derelict land and buildings.
8. In general, members of the general public appear to recognise and value the benefits derived from land, including both those related to the potential for development and health and well-being benefits linked to accessing green space.

Expert Interviews

Between March and May 2020, eight in-depth interviews were carried out with a range of land reform experts. The aims of these interviews were to inform a review of existing evidence of public attitudes to land reform and support a public questionnaire being carried out by Ipsos MORI. Interviewees were selected to provide a range of views from a number of experts in land reform, including: a Scottish university academic; Community Land Scotland (CLS); Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTA Scotland); James Hutton Institute (JHI); Ramblers Scotland; Scottish Land and Estates (SLE); Scottish Land Commission (SLC) and Scotland's Regeneration Forum (SURF). A discussion of the main themes that emerged from the interviews is detailed below. To ensure anonymity of responses, names of interviewees and organisations have not been attributed to

specific responses. However, an indication of the commonality of each response is specified where possible.

Extent of Scottish public awareness of land reform policy

Interviewees noted when generalising about the whole Scottish public that there is little awareness of the effect of land reform and that the number of people involved in the land reform debate is quite small. Interviewees noted that it is likely that members of the public often do not realise they have been affected by land reform policy and are likely to be more interested in how land reform affects them directly rather than what land reform is. One interviewee from a membership organisation noted that there is a link between the age of individuals and their level of interest in land reform, with younger people generally being more interested in the debate. One interviewee summed up their thoughts on public perceptions of land reform by saying that people are likely to be more affected by, and potentially interested in, issues relating to land and land reform than they may fully realise.

The general public perceive land reform favourably

A consensus among interviewees was that the general public perceive land reform favourably for different reasons. However, it was agreed that this is only the case for those who are aware of land reform and able to understand it. It was noted that although there is a general lack of public awareness about land reform, once people are aware of the issues related to land reform, they often believe some form of change is required. However, there are discrepancies regarding how that change is defined. According to interviewees, changes are required to ensure that large landowners and communities are working together to support meaningful engagement, increase capacities of community groups, and support greater sharing of the land's resources.

One interviewee felt that "community empowerment is probably seen as positive as long as it delivers tangible benefits in practice for communities". The interviewees also noted that some people's view of land reform is that it is not "happening quickly enough and is not as radical as some would want it to be". One interviewee felt that although the public are generally favourable towards land reform, some see land reform as "an attack on big landowners". Some interviewees noted there are mixed views among landowners on land reform. Some landowners were noted as already actively engaging with communities. Others appear to retain the view that community engagement is not a necessary component of land management and development activities.

Interviewees acknowledged that the stakeholders they have met at meetings are already those who are involved and aware of land reform. Thus, it is important to increase awareness and widen the audience for the land reform debate.

Public awareness of land reform should be increased

All interviewees agreed that public awareness of land reform should be increased. One interviewee discussed that public awareness of land, the fundamentals of land, and how it affects day-to-day lives should be increased before increasing awareness of land reform itself. One interviewee stated that, “we need to get people to understand how fundamental land is and how it affects day-to-day issues, like where people are able to buy a house and how much it costs”. Another interviewee noted that we should not focus solely on increasing awareness but on the nature of this awareness. In other words, what do the public understand as land reform and how do they perceive land and land reform as impacting their lives?

Several methods of increasing awareness were discussed by the interviewees, as a way to open the debate beyond those who already have vested interests in land reform. Direct community involvement in land reform and publicity around buyouts were not viewed as sufficient for growing wider public awareness (that is, among those less directly affected) of both the importance of land and land reform. Interviewees suggested the use of traditional media, as well as social media. One interviewee stated that innovative methods would be the most effective way of increasing public awareness. Others suggested presenting relevant statistics via accessible graphics, short films, and the creation of case studies to demonstrate success. One interviewee noted the importance of encouraging the general public to get a sense of what community ownership involves in rural and urban contexts.

Some aspects of land reform are well-understood

Several interviewees agreed that public awareness of land reform is increasing, with one participant noting that “land reform is becoming less polarised”. However, increasing awareness is a long-term process, and the actual level of understanding of land reform was seen as debatable. Interviewees agreed that, generally, the public are most likely to be aware of land reform in relation to responsible access and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC), potentially due to the high level of public engagement linked to the SOAC and related public campaigns. Keen walkers were referred to as generally having an awareness around access rights, but they may not always identify this knowledge as relating in any way to land reform. Additionally, some of those members of the general public who access the countryside regularly were noted as generally being aware that they have defined access rights, but they may not necessarily fully understand the meaning and implications of ‘responsible’ access.

Community land buyouts were also referred to as being more widely understood. This understanding was partly seen as driven by media attention around specific buyouts, with these community acquisitions having collectively raised the profile of the land reform agenda. However, for some people land reform was perceived as often being related mainly to emotive historic aspects, such as large private estates and links to the clearances. This contrasts with current government and agency objectives for land reform, which were recognised as centred on ensuring current

and future opportunities for social and economic development in Scotland's communities.

The media influences awareness and opinions of land reform

The media were recognised as having influenced awareness about land reform but not always in a positive light. One example referred to by interviewees was the community purchase of the Isle of Ulva, which received a high level of financial support from the Scottish Land Fund. This led to a considerable amount of discussion among the general public and within the media, on whether the purchase was an appropriate use of public money. Other interviewees argued that media influence has driven public perception of land reform to some extent, including coverage related to the Highland Clearances and the well-documented Isle of Eigg buyout, for example. Other interviewees argued that the media, at times, supported/reinforced stereotypical attitudes towards landownership, using 'unfortunate' headlines. However, interviewees noted that there is considerable value to balanced and well-informed media coverage for increasing awareness and understanding of land reform and related issues and these are well received. Coverage of the topic on the BBC programme 'Landward' was noted in this respect.

Land reform is still seen as more relevant to rural areas

The majority of interviewees noted that there is a perception among the general public that land reform mainly impacts and is only relevant to communities in rural areas. Interviewees noted that people in rural areas commonly have a closer relationship with the land and a deeper historical understanding of land, compared with those densely populated urban areas. This relationship was perceived by some interviewees as potentially causing an increased awareness of land reform in rural areas as compared with urban areas. People living in the Highlands and Islands were generally perceived as having a greater awareness of land reform due to their awareness of the Clearances, crofting culture and the growth of community ownership in these regions in recent decades. Communities in urban areas were seen as generally less aware of the role and potential impacts of land reform. Nevertheless, this urban-rural separation in relation to land reform was perceived as changing from land reform as a predominantly rural interest to now including urban contexts, such as in relation to abandoned and derelict land and communities aiming to purchase land in the South of Scotland or the Central Belt for community benefit.

There are different views on how land reform impacts on the general public

There were some difference between the views of interviewees on the effect of land reform on the general public. This was mainly driven by a perceived lack of clarity on what constitutes land reform. Some interviewees stated that all members of the general public are effected by land reform, for example in relation to access rights and additional community rights relating to land acquisition or purchase. However, the link to land reform policy was seen as not always clearly evident. A common theme was the lack of drawing links between the impacts of land reform and land reform policy in practice, for example one interviewee felt that 'many members see

the hill tracks as an issue, however, they do not link this to land reform'. On the other hand, some interviewees stated that there are only certain groups of people who are impacted by land reform, albeit this may change with the government shift to the urban context of land reform such as in relation to Community Right to Buy Abandoned, Neglected or Detrimental Land (in terms of the relevant legislation).

Access to housing and affordable land is a major impact of land reform

Several interviewees noted that a fundamental impact of land reform was the potential for increasing access to suitable land for housing and housing development. Particularly in urban areas, land reform has the potential for effecting people in relation to opportunities for developing homes and the use of derelict land. 'Considerable frustration' among the public was recognised in relation to poor access to housing, particularly among younger generations. Land reform was recognised as being important in relation to addressing some of the underlying reasons for rural depopulation, which was viewed as challenging to address unless communities have access to land, with unaffordable housing resulting in increasing out-migration of young people from an area.

Main challenges relating to public awareness and understanding of land reform

The planning system is complex

The complexity of the planning system was seen by three of the interviewees as a challenge in relation to land reform and the general public's awareness of it. The complexity and poor inclusivity of the planning system can make people less likely to respond to planning applications and engage in planning and community development. Plans such as Local Development Plans, Community Resilience Plans and Estate plans were seen as needing to be more effectively linked with each other to make it easier for communities to interact with them and related land use decision-making processes. One interviewee noted that the planning process, despite attempts to make it more efficient and transparent, remains 'a different language; to many and is often perceived as inaccessible to the general public.

This point was supported by another interviewee who noted that their members felt they were not knowledgeable enough to engage with planning applications. However, it was noted that planning has a role to play in community engagement. Increasing community powers by giving communities resources and decision-making powers was perceived as potentially working well in well-organised communities (for example, in Portobello). Nevertheless, an increased emphasis on localised planning and development processes may be more challenging in areas which are more disadvantaged, unless community capacity is increased. One interviewee stated that a move away from the formal planning process is required, as the process often fails to generate constructive community discussions and there is a requirement for more 'bottom up' community plans and planning decisions.

Land reform crosses policy sectors

Three interviewees raised the point that land reform does not exist 'in a bubble' and the majority of policy areas in Scotland have a land reform dimension within them, including access rights, purchasing land for development, the planning system, community empowerment and addressing depopulation. This cross-sectoral aspect of land reform policy can be a challenge, as it is difficult to make different parts of the land reform policy agenda relatable to the general public due to the fact that land reform touches upon multiple different sectors and policy areas and so is confusing as to what land reform is in practice. It is important to spread awareness among policy makers about land reform so they can see its interrelationships with other policy areas. Communication and relevant agencies working together were perceived as potentially helping to bridge the gap between stakeholder awareness and wider public awareness and understanding of the main facets of land reform.

Community capacity affects land reform outcomes

Interviewees highlighted that there are substantial challenges in relation to poverty and inequality across Scotland and in urban areas, referring to legislation such as the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, which provides communities with opportunities to take ownership of land and assets, including specific assets under public ownership. Despite the opportunities posed by this legislation (and the Community Right to Buy legislation under the 2003 Land Reform Act), these measures were recognised by some interviewees as also potentially inadvertently increasing inequality. Communities that are well-resourced can take advantage of what the relevant legislation supports (that is, they have greater available capacity to take advantage of specific legislative measures designed to increase opportunities for community ownership of land and assets), whereas those communities which are more disadvantaged are more focused on other areas, including putting food on the table, and have less capacity to take advantage of these measures.

Re-engaging the public in land use-decision making and land reform

Current levels of community engagement and other public engagement in land use-decision making are not sufficient

All but one interviewee agreed that the current levels of community engagement in land use-decision making are not sufficient. One interviewee noted that it is hard to generalise about levels of public engagement in land use, as land owners and managers fall into two broad categories: those who believe they need to have an equal relationship with the community, and those with the belief that communities are not aware of land management. Interviewees recognised some positive examples of community engagement in the planning system which could be extended further. One interviewee noted that 'we have a major problem in Scotland' - the population size in local authority areas is not comparable with the rest of the EU, for example there are 10,000-18,000 people per local authority in Germany,

compared with some cases of 160,000 people per local authority in Scotland. The inequality results in the mechanisms to make change and engage communities in decision-making processes being constrained.

Land reform discourse should be reframed

Interviewees highlighted how it is not necessarily a lack of interest in land reform that affects awareness and engagement with the issue. Often, it is a lack of understanding of what land reform is and how it affects people that is the challenge. The effects of land reform are not always packaged or marketed as 'land reform', so people may often be more aware of specific measures or outcomes related to land reform than they realise. Interviewees emphasised a need for wider societal debate and discussion about land reform which moves beyond existing land reform terminology to 'talk about it [land reform] and not just use the land reform terms'. Reframing the discussion is important to increase awareness and move away from the stereotypical view that land reform is based largely around private estates. Steps could include publishing the desired outcomes of land reform and increasing awareness of the public and private benefits attributable to Scotland's land, as well as demonstrating how land reform is not only of relevance to rural people. Land reform needs to be spoken about more openly with greater transparency as to what it is, and the effects associated with the land reform agenda.

Community and stakeholder capacity building are important

Capacity building is required to support community engagement, to generate discussion and to illustrate the value of effective public consultation to landowners. Interviewees raised the common issue of the same people sitting on community groups and organisations, which leads to these groups often not being inclusive nor fully representing the community's views. Often, the members of groups are from older generations, due to limited wider community capacity (particularly in rural areas) and the time commitment associated with being a member of a community group. An additional challenge recognised by some interviewees is the challenge for community groups being involved in decision-making processes related to land, particularly in rural areas, when there is a perceived lack of their capacity and knowledge about land management.

Inclusive awareness raising of land reform is required

Four interviewees discussed that communication and awareness raising needs to be inclusive, to consider issues holistically and from a Scotland-wide standpoint as opposed to from a rural or urban perspective. These interviewees emphasised that more needs to be done to communicate and demonstrate the relevance of land reform to those in the South of Scotland and in urban areas. Several interviewees noted that to engage people effectively and increase wider societal awareness, land reform, which is a very broad topic, needs to be made relevant to people's everyday lives. Increasing relevance of land reform may be through demonstrating the benefits of land reform across multiple communities through, for example, highlighting the outcomes from existing community buyouts, community facilities development and successful public asset transfers. All interviewees recognised that

land reform does not only effect those in rural areas. Nevertheless, increasing transparency of what land reform is and how it is relevant to urban areas was recognised as requiring further work. It is important for the Scottish Government and other stakeholders to look at how the multiple benefits of land reform can be effectively communicated to the public at large.

Future thoughts

Several interviewees discussed potential future changes in land use decision-making processes and public awareness of land reform. Some argued that, due to increased uptake of community ownership in recent years, the full outcomes of community ownership (for example, social, economic and environmental) are likely to be better understood over the longer term. Over time, increased community ownership also offers scope for further diversifying the overall pattern of landownership in Scotland. One interviewee stated that in the future there is likely to be a greater shift to smaller scale community ownership and the urban context of land reform. Another interviewee noted that in the future every major land holding will have a community engagement plan and a defined structure set for ongoing community engagement in decision-making processes. Some interviewees discussed the potential requirement for statutory consultation, to ensure meaningful consultation between landowners and communities occurs widely in the future.

It is early days for the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement (LRRS)

Most interviewees agreed that the LRRS is improving societal engagement with the land and improving relations between landowners and the general public. Some interviewees felt it was a framework and a 'powerful statement' which is beginning to influence what people are doing, however, changing embedded attitudes was perceived as requiring considerable time. Another interviewee noted how the LRRS is not 'as much of a lever to encourage landowners to engage with public, it does not have much teeth, it does not overlap explicitly with the Land Use Strategy'. Several interviewees commented that it is too early to determine whether the LRRS has been successful and others stated that further case studies are required to help increase awareness and evidence the success of the LRRS, as well as appropriate guidance, incentives, sanctions and legislation. One interviewee noted that they expect a decade is required to determine whether the LRRS has had a more general influence and that the changes from LRRS will be a 'slow burn'.

The Scottish Land Commission (SLC) has a critical role to play

Several interviewees discussed the role of the SLC as important for increasing public awareness of land reform. Specific responses included that: the SLC are producing useful and helpful statements; the SLC can and will raise awareness on how land reform can support rural Scotland without using the term land reform; they are researching areas that are less obvious in their link to land reform; and they are increasing awareness of land reform among younger people. The SLC was also perceived as 'doing a good job' and spreading the word in terms of what it wants to do and what the land reform agenda should be. The SLC was also recognised as

helping to define the land reform agenda as much broader than what it would have been in the past, which will mean it effects more people.

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Annex 2: Questionnaire

Section one – screener and background questions:

QD1 Could I ask your age at your last birthday?

1. Numeric range (18 – 99)
2. Don't know (DK)
3. Refused

QD2 Which of the following describes how you think of yourself?

1. Male
2. Female
3. Or in another way?
4. Refused

QD3 And are you currently:

1. Working – full time
2. Working – part-time
3. Not working – unemployed
4. Not working – retired
5. Not working – student
6. Not working – other

Section 2 – Overall perceptions of the land

We would like to talk to you a little bit about land in Scotland. Some of these questions may not be applicable in the current COVID-19 lockdown situation. Where this is the case, we'd like you to think about a time before the lockdown was applied.

When answering the questions in the survey, we would like you to think about land as the countryside, the coastline and land in towns and cities.

Q3 Thinking about the land in your local area, do you use it for...?

1. Exercise/sport (Y/N)
2. Leisure/recreation (Y/N)
3. Work/business/investment (Y/N)
4. Growing your own food and/or keeping livestock (Y/N)
5. Anything else (please specify)

Q4 How does the land in Scotland benefit the country as a whole? Please think about the nation as a whole, rather than about individuals. You can give a maximum of three answers.

1. The economy and jobs
2. Tourism and recreation
3. Provision of natural resources (for example, water and fuel)
4. As a part of Scotland's culture and identity
5. As a home for nature
6. Food production
7. Renewable energy sources
8. Improving the population's health and wellbeing
9. Other (please specify)

Q5 Which of the following would you say is the biggest challenge for the future of Scotland's land? Please give one answer only.

1. Inequality in land ownership
2. Housing shortages
3. Derelict or vacant land
4. Climate change
5. Wildlife protection
6. Building on Greenspace
7. Other (please specify)
8. DK

Section 3 – Attitudes to Land Reform

Since Scottish devolution, there have been a range of new laws and policies changing how land is owned, how decisions about land are made, how land can be accessed by the public and how land is used for housing and development. These types of changes are known as land reform.

Q6 How much, if anything, do you know about the Scottish Government's plans for land reform in Scotland?

1. A lot
2. A little
3. Not very much
4. Nothing at all
5. DK

Historically, around half of Scotland's rural land has been owned by around 500 people and this has been a focus of the land reform debate.

Q7 Do you think there is enough information available about who owns the land in Scotland?

1. Yes, definitely
2. Yes, probably
3. No, probably not
4. No, definitely not
5. DK

In recent years, the Scottish Government has aimed to widen the ownership of both rural and urban land, to include more public, community and third sector ownership.

Q8 In general, would you say you support or oppose this aim?

1. Strongly support
2. Tend to support
3. Neither support nor oppose
4. Tend to oppose
5. Strongly oppose
6. DK

Q9 Which of the following do you think should be the main priorities for land use in Scotland? You can give a maximum of three answers.

1. Housing
2. Farming
3. Recreation
4. Renewable energy
5. Wildlife protection
6. Tourism
7. Other (specify)
8. DK

Now thinking about a different topic...

Q10 Were you aware that the Scottish Government supports communities in Scotland to buy and own areas of land and buildings?

1. Yes
2. No
3. DK

The Scottish Government introduced a 'Community Right to Buy' (CRtB). This allows community organisations to register an interest in an area of land or a building. If that land or building comes up for sale, they are given first choice to buy that land. These are sometimes referred to as "community buyouts". In 2015, this right was extended to urban areas as well as rural areas.

Q11 Are you aware of any examples of community buyouts in your local area or elsewhere in Scotland?

1. Yes – in my local area
2. Yes – elsewhere in Scotland
3. Yes – both in my local area and elsewhere in Scotland
4. No – not aware of any
5. DK

Now, moving onto a different topic, about access rights in Scotland.

Q12 How confident are you that you know your rights regarding which types of land you can freely access on foot or bicycle in Scotland?

1. Very confident
2. Fairly confident
3. Not very confident
4. Not at all confident
5. DK

Everyone has the right to access most of Scotland's outdoors (excluding specific types of land such as that close to homes or schools), if they do so responsibly, with respect for people's property, and for the environment. These rights are sometimes referred to as 'right to roam'

Q13 To what extent do you support or oppose this 'right to roam'?

1. Strongly support
2. Tend to support
3. Neither support nor oppose
4. Tend to oppose
5. Strongly oppose
6. DK

Q14 Have you encountered any issues in the last 12 months when you thought you had the right to roam but someone else disagreed?

1. Yes
2. No
3. DK

Vacant and derelict land, is land which has typically been used in the past for industrial purposes or previously been built-on, but is not currently being used.

Q15 How concerned are you about vacant and derelict land in your local area?

1. Very concerned
2. Fairly concerned
3. Not very concerned
4. Not at all concerned
5. Don't know

Q16 One of the Scottish Government's aims is to reduce the amount of vacant and derelict land in Scotland and to give local communities the chance to take control of the land.

Were you aware of this?

1. Yes
2. No
3. DK

We're going to move on to a slightly different topic now.

Q17 How important do you think protecting wildlife should be as a factor to consider when making decisions about how land is used?

1. Very important
2. Fairly important
3. Not very important
4. Not at all important
5. DK

Q18 And how important do you think tackling climate change should be as a factor to consider when making decisions about land use?

1. Very important
2. Fairly important
3. Not very important
4. Not at all important
5. DK

Section 4 – Involvement in land use decisions

Q19 Have you ever been involved in decision-making about land use in your area? This could be in cities and towns as well as in the countryside

1. Yes
2. No
3. DK

Q20 Would you be interested in being more involved in decision-making about land and planning/developments in your area in the future? This might involve sending a letter or posting on social media, responding to a

1. Yes – definitely
2. Yes – probably
3. No – probably not
4. No – definitely not

Q21 And would you prefer to be involved...?

1. Online
2. In person
3. Both

Q22 What are the main reasons stopping you from becoming more involved in decision making around land use in your area? Please think about the time prior to the COVID-19 lockdown and give up to a maximum of three answers

1. I don't know enough about it
2. I don't have enough time
3. I don't know how to get involved
4. I am not interested
5. I don't think it would change anything
6. Nothing is stopping me
7. Other (please specify)
8. DK

Q23 What would be most helpful in encouraging greater community engagement in land decision making in your area? (READ OUT OPTIONS)

1. More awareness of local land issues
2. Examples of communities which have been successfully involved in land decision-making
3. Clearer rules and regulations on land reform in my area
4. Having meetings in accessible venues at convenient times
5. Other (please specify)
6. DK

That's the end of the questions about land, before we finish off is there anything else you'd like to say about land use or land reform in Scotland?



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