



# Scotland's Land Reform Futures International Symposium

Purpose and Objectives

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Annie McKee – [annie.mckee@hutton.ac.uk](mailto:annie.mckee@hutton.ac.uk)

PI, Scotland's Land Reform Futures



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Image shows Mairi MacAllan MSP launching the Scottish Governments 'Land Reform in a Net Zero Nation' consultation, July 2022; image from: <https://twitter.com/ScotGovNetZero/status/15519572336164039>

# Scottish Government Strategic Research Programme 2022-2027

- Land reform: new research area and focus of new legislation: Land Reform (Scotland) Bill
- Goal of research funding: to **provide evidence** to support policies around the development of **community ownership, community engagement**, and better understanding of the **role of land ownership in achieving net zero emissions** and reversing biodiversity decline in Scotland.



# Scotland's Land Reform Futures project

- **Project aims to:** (i) empower communities through increasing transparency of land data; (ii) understand impact of land tenure models on land use objectives; (iii) explore how Scottish land reform reconfigures cultural, legal, fiscal, and social relations to land.



# Why are we here?

- The **Scotland's Land Reform Futures** project proposal stated that:
- *“The project stakeholder advisory group will host an international symposium of leading land reform academics and policy makers to share experiences of land reform in Scotland and learn from the outcomes of alternative land tenure models in other countries”.*
  - International land reform conference a **commitment by the Scottish Government** in 2019 Programme for Government.
  - **Stakeholder Advisory Group** members will be session chairs and provide a presentation based on lessons from a fieldtrip to the Netherlands (October 2025).
- The Symposium will *“create new international research collaborations, ...provide the opportunity for new research consortia to be built, to respond to future research calls within the UK and internationally”.*



# International Symposium

- Purpose and objectives:
  - (i) to **share experiences of land reform** in Scotland and learn from the **outcomes of alternative land tenure models** in other countries; and
  - (ii) to allow **collaboration and discussion** between policy makers and land reform academics (both within and outwith Scotland).
  
- With the stakeholder advisory group, we agreed that the theme of the Symposium would be: ***‘Achieving collaboration, cooperation, and a just transition in land: lessons from and challenges facing Scottish land reform’***.



# Programme overview and structure

- Plenary sessions with speakers in-person and online; international presentations complemented with Scottish ‘context’.
  - Welcome and keynote by **Michael Russell, Chair of Scottish Land Commission**
  - Address by **Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon MSP.**
- Lunchtime digital poster and research ‘marketplace’ sessions using new **Hutton Hub ‘immersive suite’.**
- Tour of the Hutton Hub with Lee-Ann Sutherland
- Interactive discussion on Scotland’s contribution to the Second International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD+20).
- Breakout discussions during Wednesday morning emerging from key themes of discussion.
- Participants joining online from across the UK, Sweden, Netherlands, Belgium, Dubai, Japan and Canada.
  - ***Welcome to all who have travelled to Aberdeen and those joining online!***



# Symposium outputs

- Symposium report for RESAS (Scottish Government's Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services Division).
  - Please note plenary sessions and breakout groups will be recorded to support report-writing.
- Short videos of key learning points – Wednesday lunchtime.
- Potential Scottish 'statement' for ICARRD+20.
- Inspiration and new connections!





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**SRUC**

# Overview of Scotland's Land Reform Futures project

Annie McKee, James Hutton Institute

&

Ian Merrell, Scotland's Rural College



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Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
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**RESAS**

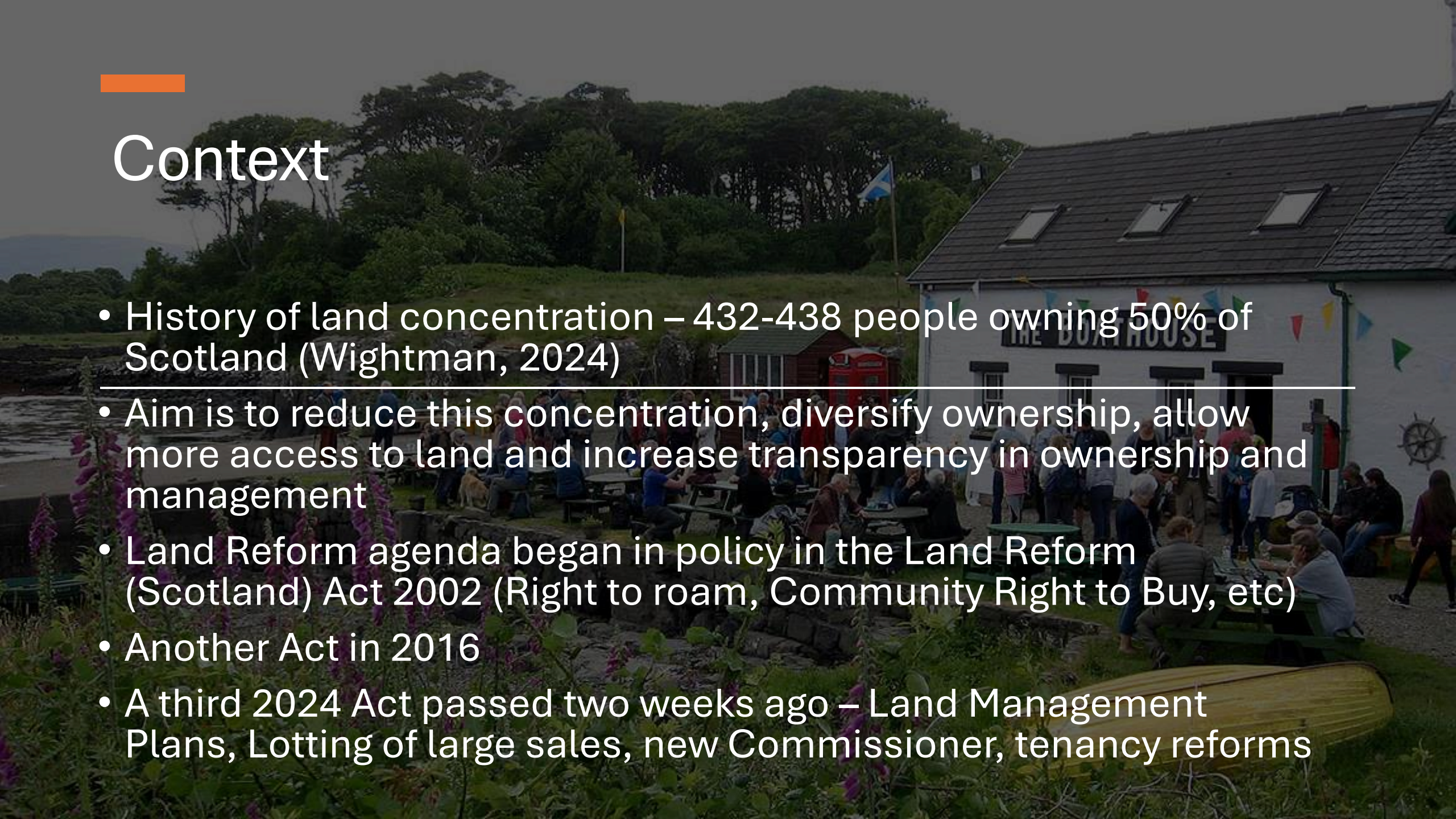
Rural & Environmental Science  
and Analytical Services



# Context

- History of land concentration – 432-438 people owning 50% of Scotland (Wightman, 2024)

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  - Aim is to reduce this concentration, diversify ownership, allow more access to land and increase transparency in ownership and management
  - Land Reform agenda began in policy in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2002 (Right to roam, Community Right to Buy, etc)
  - Another Act in 2016
  - A third 2024 Act passed two weeks ago – Land Management Plans, Lotting of large sales, new Commissioner, tenancy reforms
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# Research on Land Reform

- Two ‘sister’ projects
- James Hutton Institute aims and objectives:
  - **Community land ownership** and engagement in **land use decision-making**
  - The role of land ownership and **land reform in achieving net zero** emissions and reversing biodiversity decline
  - Advance social theory on **community empowerment, social justice, and the potential for progressive property rights** in Scotland

# Research on Land Reform

- SRUC aims and objectives:
  - Increase understanding of the impacts of **land-based public funding mechanisms on land values**
  - Increase understanding of **landowner investment and ownership behaviours**
  - How **monetisation of ecosystem services** influence both land reform and land use outcomes
- Work on Land Markets published collaboratively with Scottish Land Commission – more on this later