

Scotland's Land Reform Futures

Stakeholder Advisory Group – Role, Remit and Terms of Reference



Project Timescale: August 2022 – March 2027

Funding body: Scottish Government, Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services Division (RESAS)

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Project aims

The project 'Scotland's Land Reform Futures' will support Scottish Government policy development regarding land reform, community land ownership and engagement in land use decision-making, as well as increase understanding of the role of land ownership and land reform in achieving net zero emissions and reversing biodiversity decline in Scotland. The project will build knowledge of Scottish land reform processes and outcomes that can contribute to wider global land issues requiring urgent attention. It will seek to advance social theory on community empowerment, social justice, and the potential for progressive property rights in Scotland. The research team comprises researchers from the James Hutton Institute and Scotland's Rural College. It is part of the Scottish Government's Strategic Research Programme 2022-2027.

The 'Scotland's Land Reform Futures' project aims to develop a transdisciplinary, deliberative, knowledge exchange process to determine a new 'land imaginary', that aligns with Scottish Government policy objectives. It also seeks to build consensus and facilitate social learning between and within Scotland's land ownership and land use sector, and to integrate knowledge to support future land reform policy development. It will adhere to an open science approach, involving non-scientists throughout the research process. The 'Scotland's Land Reform Futures' project (led by Hutton) and the related Rural Land Markets project (led by SRUC) will work closely with a stakeholder advisory group throughout the five-year research programme.

Stakeholder Advisory Group

The role of the Stakeholder Advisory Group ('advisory group') is to support pathways to research impact and to ensure research transparency, accountability, and relevance within the wider context of Scottish land reform. The advisory group will provide access to networks, advice on case studies, and support open science (i.e. ensuring public accessibility and accountability of research processes and findings), as well as input expert opinions (e.g. cultural, fiscal, and legal). In more detail:

- (i) The advisory group will involve 10 to 12 individuals from across land ownership and land use sectors in Scotland. The advisory group will be chaired by Emma McCallum (RESAS).
- (ii) Advisory group members will be interviewed prior to attending the first meeting, to gather baseline data regarding knowledge, values, and attitudes to land reform. These interviews will remain anonymous and confidential, with key themes and illustrative anonymous quotes used to guide discussion within meetings.
- (iii) The advisory group will meet in person and virtually at regular intervals throughout the five-year research programme. Three hybrid meetings per year are proposed. Meetings will be structured according to a theme relevant to the research, providing the opportunity for open discussion, pilot testing of methods (e.g. interview questions, dataset accessibility, etc.), feedback on research findings, and consideration of policy implications. The advisory group meetings will be facilitated by the research team, utilising innovative participatory approaches when appropriate. When requested by the advisory group, external experts on the meeting theme can be invited to provide input to the advisory group discussion. All administrative support required will be provided by the research teams.
- (iv) Advisory group members will adhere to the Chatham House Rule. They agree to participate in an individual capacity, and that discussions within the group will remain confidential.
- (v) Advisory group meetings will be recorded (audio only), providing qualitative data for narrative and content analysis (within Work Package 2, Scotland's Land Reform Futures project), and meeting minutes will be approved by the advisory group prior to publication on the project webpage.
- (vi) In Year 4 (2025-26), the 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 (in conjunction with researchers working on Work Package 2).
- (vii) In Years 4-5 (2025-2027), the stakeholder group will participate in scenario planning to develop an action plan for future land reform and co-construct narratives on land ownership and management. The action plan will support the development of policy recommendations and future research needs, and it will be presented in a final report for the advisory group members and Scottish Government policy makers.
- (viii) During Year 5 (2026-2027), advisory group members will be interviewed individually to capture their reflections on the research process, group dynamics, scenario planning, and final 'land imaginary'. These interviews will seek to identify evidence of social learning, consensus building, social capital creation, and any other outcomes from the advisory group and co-construction process.