



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

HELPING RURAL SCOTLAND THRIVE

PEOPLE JOBS NATURE

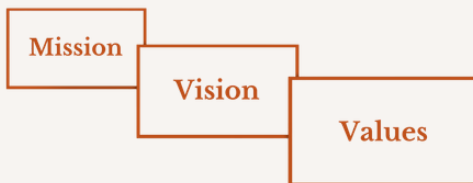
ABOUT SLE

Our vision is a prosperous and sustainable future for rural Scotland, delivering benefits for all. We help to deliver this by championing and supporting rural businesses that provide economic, social and environmental benefit to the countryside.

From campsites to community owners to country estates, our members represent a diverse community passionate about promoting rural Scotland, and we've acted as their voice for over 100 years.

Our members have businesses or interests in a broad range of rural property and land management areas, and we help them to prosper through the knowledge, advice and relationships we're able to provide.

We're here to represent members' views to politicians and other decision makers, to identify future opportunities and risks for land-based businesses, to celebrate rural successes, and to provide support to those with a stake in land and property in rural Scotland. Our member network is a great way to share knowledge and good practice.



OUR MISSION

Our mission is to lead and support rural businesses to deliver publicly and politically recognised measurable benefits for society, the economy and the environment, with a focus on people, jobs, and nature.

OUR VISION

We have a vision for a prosperous and sustainable future for rural Scotland, which delivers benefits for all.

OUR VALUES

Our values and our actions match our beliefs. We are **open** and transparent in our approach; we are inclusive and encourage collaboration; we enable and **empower** members and colleagues to be and to achieve the best they can; we **lead by example** and promote high standards of professional integrity and **responsibility** amongst our membership; we value facts and sharing knowledge; we are **future-focussed**, working towards the Scotland of tomorrow; we strive to increase the public understanding of the **benefits delivered to Scotland by our members**; we are **passionate** about the work we do.

OUR BOARD

In 2025, Andrew Douglas Miller stepped down as a Board member after completing his full tenure with SLE. Evelyn Channing stepped down as a Director but stayed on as an Adviser to the Board.



Dee Ward
Chairman



Patrick Colquhoun
Vice Chair (Policy)



Sarah-Jane Laing
Chief Executive



Angus Cheape
Director



Michael Home
Director



Lucy Laidlaw
Director



Derek Lewis
Director



Alastair Orr Ewing
Director



Michael Upton
Director



Laura Warender
Director



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FOREWORD



Dee Ward
Chairman

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2 025 was a defining year for rural Scotland, with major policy decisions and real-world events reinforcing both the importance of land-based businesses and the challenges they face.

At the forefront has been the progression of the Scottish Government's land reform agenda. As legislation completed its passage through the Scottish Parliament, it became clear that, while intended to reshape patterns of ownership and management, significant concerns remain around its practicality and impact. Throughout the year, SLE worked intensively to ensure that the voice of rural businesses was heard—consistently advocating for measures that are proportionate, evidence-based and capable of supporting investment and long-term stewardship. We have been clear that policy must enable, not hinder, those delivering for people, jobs and nature across Scotland. Our work on land reform continues at pace and will be an enduring priority in 2026 and beyond.

SLE has led calls for a coordinated, Scotland-wide approach to wildfire resilience, including a strategic action plan and stronger collaboration between land managers, government and emergency services. Encouragingly, progress has been made through initiatives such as a national Wildfire Summit and the provision of recovery funding to rural businesses who helped contain the devastating blaze at Carrbridge and Dava Moor. However, it is clear that sustained action will be required in the years ahead, and SLE will continue to lead calls for further action to bolster prevention, preparedness and readiness.

Alongside these challenges, one of the most pressing long-term issues facing rural Scotland—depopulation—has moved firmly up the policy agenda. New research and policy proposals have highlighted the urgent need to reverse population decline and support thriving, resilient communities. Solutions must address the fundamentals: access to housing, employment opportunities and the infrastructure required to retain and attract people to rural areas. SLE has been at the centre of this conversation, putting forward practical proposals to make a difference.

Across all of these areas, a consistent theme has emerged: the need for collaboration, clarity and confidence.

Rural businesses are being asked to deliver more than ever before—supporting economic growth, restoring nature, managing climate risks and sustaining communities. They stand ready to do so, but require a policy environment that recognises their contribution and supports long-term investment. As we move into an era of political change courtesy of the 2026 Holyrood election, SLE will be making the case for this – loudly and proudly.

Throughout 2025, SLE has continued to strengthen its position as a leading voice for rural Scotland – engaging with policymakers, generating high-impact research, providing evidence-based solutions and supporting our members through a period of significant change. Our membership continues to grow and diversify, reflecting the evolving nature of land ownership and management, and strengthening the depth and credibility of our work. We pride ourselves in providing first class member services, from e-communications to high quality events to tailored advice. Representing your interests has been, and remains, a real privilege for the SLE team.

Looking ahead, the challenges are substantial, but so too are the opportunities. With continued focus, constructive engagement and a shared commitment to delivering for people, jobs and nature, we are confident that **rural Scotland can – and will – thrive.**



Sarah-Jane Laing
Chief Executive

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Sarah-Jane Laing'.

SLE COLLEAGUES



Sarah-Jane Laing
Chief Executive



Tony Stevenson
Director of Operations



Stephen Young
Director of Policy



Ross Ewing
Director of Moorland
& Strategic Projects



Cameron Gillies
Head of External Affairs



Fiona Van Aardt
Head of Regions/Regional
Manager Highlands



Donald Greig
Head of Membership Communications



Ania Rytel-Dunn
PA to Chief Executive & Board



Eleanor Kay
Senior Policy Adviser
Agriculture & Climate Change



Jackie McCreery
Legal Adviser



Anna Gardiner
Senior Policy Adviser
Business & Property



Simon Ovenden
Policy Adviser
Access & Visitor Management



Nadia Flaherty
Policy Adviser
Wildlife Management



Nic MacLeod
Policy & Public
Affairs Adviser



Nathan Bryceland
Policy Adviser
Biodiversity & Woodlands



Jim Millar
Policy Adviser
Rural Communities



Laura Ferrier
Policy Adviser
Natural Capital



Neil Gunn
Wildlife Estates Scotland
Project Manager



Fiona Brown
Regional Manager
North East



Clare Sturla
Regional Manager
South East



Elena Hogarth
Regional Manager
Clydeside



George Moore
Regional Manager
Dumfries & Galloway



Ruth White
Regional Manager
Central



Megan Ritchie
Communications Assistant



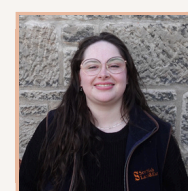
Neil Johnstone
Digital & Marketing Officer



Michelle Nicholson
Business & Finance
Manager



Susana Williams
Business Development Manager



Sara Ward
Events & Member Services
Coordinator

BUSINESS AND MEMBERSHIP UPDATE



Tony Stevenson
Director of Operations

2025 SAW US EXTEND OUR INFLUENCE AMONG LANDOWNERS AND RURAL BUSINESSES, DELIVERING A FURTHER SUSTAINED GROWTH IN MEMBERSHIP AS WELL AS AN EXCITING PROGRAMME OF EVENTS AND MEMBER OPPORTUNITIES.

The SLE membership has grown for another consecutive year across all categories, with over 190,000 acres and 101 new members added to the database.

2025 saw a greater focus on larger landholdings, and the operations team have been successful in recruiting 37 new landholdings larger than 5,000 acres. While continuing our efforts to engage with a broad range of new and emerging landowners, the attraction of SLE membership to more traditional landowners remains strong.

As government policy and legislation continues to challenge rural businesses irrespective of their objectives, we are seeing a more diverse range of opportunities across all sectors, including agriculture, forestry, food and drink, tourism and utilities. These trends recognise the need for strong representation and tailored support.

As debate around key policy areas such as land reform, housing and climate change intensifies, the depth and breadth of experience within our membership has never been more important. This diversity enables balanced, well-informed contributions and supports a constructive environment for meaningful discussion and shared learning.

Our partnerships with Lycetts Insurance and SLE Energy Services (TrooCost) continue to deliver strong value, providing members with cost savings, expert advice and accessible support, while also contributing through marketing, sponsorship and event participation.

Demand for SLE's commercial offering remains exceptionally strong. Sponsorship opportunities for 2026 were secured by the end of 2025, with demand and waiting lists for events for 2027. Advertising space in *LandBusiness Magazine* is consistently filled well in advance.

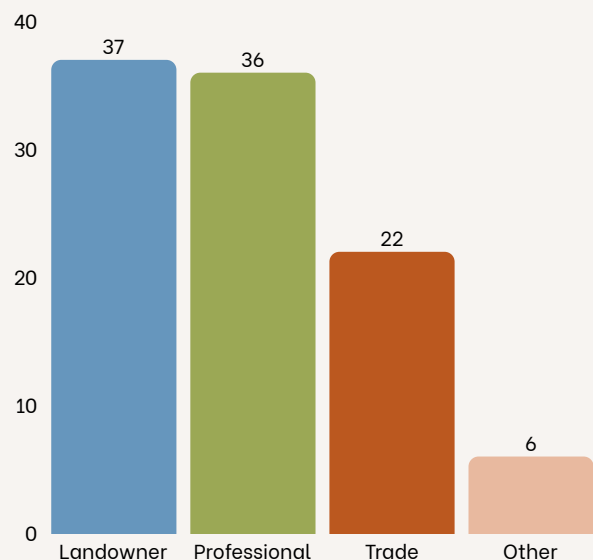
SLE's corporate members play a vital dual role providing essential revenue to support member services, while also contributing valuable expertise that keeps the wider membership informed and well-supported. Overall, 2025 was another successful year for business and membership, and we look forward to driving further success in 2026.

OUR PARTNERS

Lycetts
Insurance Brokers and Financial Services

troo.
Scottish Land & Estates
ENERGY SERVICES

NEW MEMBERS 2025



SELECTION OF NEW MEMBERS IN 2025



Carter Jonas



THE MACALLAN

STEWART RURAL LTD
LAND MANAGEMENT

The Exiteers



POLITICAL UPDATE



Cameron Gillies
Head of External Affairs

2025 MARKED A DELIBERATE SHIFT IN SLE'S PUBLIC AFFAIRS APPROACH. HAVING ACHIEVED RECORD LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT IN 2024, OUR FOCUS **PRIORITISED MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT** WITH SENIOR DECISION MAKERS AROUND KEY LEGISLATION AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THAT WILL DELIVER LONG-TERM INFLUENCE FOR RURAL SCOTLAND.

Throughout 2025, the SLE team concentrated on strengthening and deepening relationships with those at the heart of political decision making. This meant a greater emphasis on engagement with Cabinet Secretaries, Ministers, party leaders and senior parliamentarians, ensuring that rural perspectives are understood at the highest levels of government.

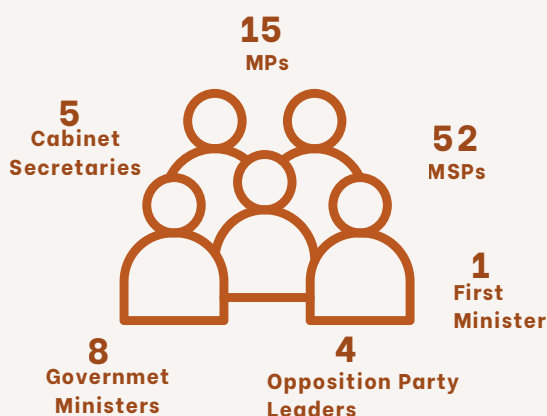
With the 2026 Holyrood election on the horizon, our engagement strategy was carefully targeted towards those most likely to be returned to Parliament. By focusing on continuity and influence, we have worked to ensure that SLE remains a trusted and constructive partner to policymakers across all parties as future manifestos take shape.

This more strategic approach has further cemented SLE's reputation as a credible and solutions-focused voice for rural Scotland - one that not only articulates the challenges facing rural businesses, but brings forward practical, evidence-based proposals to address them. Our legislative work across the Land Reform, Natural Environment and Housing agendas has ensured that rural considerations remain firmly embedded in parliamentary debate and policy development.

The political landscape in 2025 continued to evolve following the change in leadership at Holyrood in 2024 and the election of a new UK Government. As both governments progressed significant legislative programmes, SLE maintained a strong and consistent presence, ensuring that the rural economy, and those who live and work within it, were not overlooked.

Our engagement over the course of the year has been shaped by a clear objective to influence policy early, constructively, and at the right level. This has enabled us to move beyond reactive engagement and instead play a proactive role in shaping the direction of travel on key issues affecting rural Scotland.

IN 2025 WE MET:



Alongside our political engagement, 2025 was our most successful year on record for media coverage.

Our work on major pieces of legislation, combined with Ross Ewing's authoritative report on the impact of wildfire events near Carrbridge and Dava Moor, and the high-profile launch of our policy paper **Repopulating Rural Scotland**, ensured that SLE was consistently at the centre of national and regional debate.

As a result, SLE achieved its highest ever level of press coverage, significantly increasing our reach and reinforcing our position as the leading voice for rural businesses in Scotland.

"When you want a sense check on something, the question 'What are SLE saying about this?' is not a bad one to pose. That reflects the work that Sarah Jane and her team do. It is exceptional and commands respect across the political spectrum in Scotland."

The Rt. Hon. Alistair Carmichael MP, Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee addressing our London reception in December 2025.

THIS YEAR...



32

Briefing papers produced for politicians



51

Mentions in the Holyrood Debating Chamber - more than ever



1054

Appearances in separate news articles online and in regional and national press in 2025 - over 200 more than 2024



8

Members of the SLE team gave evidence to parliamentary committees



40

Successful amendments contributed to key legislation including the Housing Act, Land Reform Act and Natural Environment Act



13

SLE provided written contributions to 13 Public Consultations

POLICY FOREWORD



Patrick Colquhoun
Vice Chair (Policy)

It feels like we say this every year, but 2025 was truly a year like no other. As the clock ticked down towards the end of the parliamentary term, MSPs passed a plethora of Bills and statutory instruments at speed. As highlighted in the Political Update (p.5), the team has not only been busier than ever, but our impact and reach have been both tangible and consequential.

It is increasingly clear that while several organisations operate in the rural policy space, no other entity covers the same breadth of topics as SLE. With a small team of passionate rural professionals and a diversity of skills, SLE is best placed to represent your interests and help your businesses thrive.

Influencing legislation and decision-making is critical to our work, and so too is making sure members are fully up to date with policy changes. As part of our member service, you can contact the policy team to seek advice on a wide range of topics. The information sheet section on our website is regularly updated, covering everything from the Land Use Strategy to the Climate Change plan. Similarly, our quarterly policy update remains well read, as are updates in *Land Business* and our weekly e-News.

In 2025, as part of our information offering for members, we again ran our hugely successful Land Managers' Training Day in March and Tax Event in November. Both were well attended with over 100 delegates present at each, hearing presentations about practical issues relating to business from a mix of the SLE policy team and much-valued professional members sharing their knowledge and experience.

The focus of the 2025 Policy Roadshow was Housing - always a hot topic for members. This year's series included updates on rent controls, the increase in landlord responsibilities for property maintenance, as well as updates on the opportunities to develop new housing sites. Across four venues, 230 members attended events which offered an opportunity for a more thorough exploration of specific topics and for members to put questions to a range of experts. Looking ahead, we plan to continue running policy roadshows each year, adjusting the topic in line with key issues of the day.

Webinars and podcasts are also available to members to enjoy, with a mix of in-house policy expertise along with special guests to add further depth. Members can access all recordings via the SLE website. We will continue to provide information to members via a range of mediums, so that no matter how you prefer to access content, we should always have a format that suits you.

Our aim at SLE is not only to lobby for positive change, but also – importantly – that we lead and shape debate: for our members; stakeholders; and politicians. With this in mind, we are looking to publish more 'thought pieces' to outline positive steps which can help specific elements in rural business. In 2025 we published an updated [#Route2050](#), which sets out a vision for a prosperous land management sector, while at the tail end of the year, we also published a paper on Repopulating Rural Scotland (available on the SLE website). This important topic is a key challenge for members and all in rural Scotland and our paper outlined a series of relatively small and inexpensive changes which could be made which would potentially have a disproportionately big impact. Learning from experiences in other countries, we know that rural depopulation does not need to be simply accepted; it can be reversed.

While advising on current situations, we also fulfil a role of industry leadership, bringing forward ideas and a vision for the future of land management as well as championing the great work our members do and highlighting the myriad of benefits that land management brings to Scotland as a whole. We also work in partnership with fantastic organisations such as Historic Houses, supporting them to safeguard interests we know to be of central importance to members.

We will continue to provide these services for the membership and look forward to doing so in the coming months and years.

"I can genuinely say that when we come to renewal of our SLE membership both for ourselves as professional members and for our clients, I never hesitate as I believe that SLE's membership fees are the best value for money that we experience. The advice that we get is given incredibly quickly and with great thought and proactivity. We and our clients would be lost without it."

SLE Professional Member

POLICY PROGRESS



Stephen Young
Director of Policy

IN 2025, THE POLICY TEAM ENGAGED AT PACE TO ADDRESS KEY CHALLENGES AND SHAPE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEMBERS.



AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL CAPITAL

In 2025, the Agricultural Reform Route Map introduced new requirements for direct payments in Scotland, including strengthened protections for peatlands and wetlands through cross-compliance, a Whole Farm Plan as part of Basic Payment eligibility, and a new calving interval requirement for the Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme. SLE worked to ensure sufficient support was available for completing the two audits required for the Whole Farm Plan and pressed government to align peatland cross-compliance rules with existing peatland policies.

An interim Code of Practice on Sustainable and Regenerative Agriculture was published in June, intended as non-statutory guidance. Many of its recommendations reflected those in [SLE's Route2050: Land and Estates for the Future](#), launched at the Royal Highland Show. The latest Route2050 publication sets out immediate actions needed from government to help land managers respond to climate change and global market volatility. Alongside calls for improved policy delivery and clearer communication, it identifies longer-term measures required to support a resilient rural sector. The report identified national security, climate change and market volatility as key drivers of change in rural business and a need for policy that supports them.

Elsewhere, natural capital continues to be a significant topic of interest for SLE members. 2025 saw Scottish Government taking further steps to develop natural capital markets and establish ways to utilise both public and private finance. SLE accepted a place on the Ecosystem Restoration Code (ERC) Working Group to represent members interest in the development of the ERC, the engagement paper for which was published in May 2025.



RURAL PROPERTY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2025](#) represents the most significant reform of Scotland's private rented sector in recent years, introducing a new rent control framework alongside enhanced tenant rights. Throughout the Bill's passage, SLE played a central role in shaping provisions to ensure the legislation reflects the realities of rural housing supply, investment and management.

SLE highlighted the risk that overly restrictive rent controls could deter investment and reduce the availability of rural homes. Working alongside the Build to Rent sector, we successfully opposed the original proposal for a 0% default rent cap in designated rent control areas. The Act instead adopts a more investible model, setting the cap at Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1%.

We also secured amendments requiring all landlords—not only property owners—to comply with obligations to provide rent evidence. In addition, SLE persuaded Ministers of the need for local authorities to recognise situations where additional costs, such as private water and private wire, are bundled into rent. The legislation was amended accordingly.

SLE successfully called for a Rural Impact Assessment, ensuring that rural considerations are embedded in implementation. The Act now requires explicit consultation with rural stakeholders as guidance is developed and obliges local authorities to consider how rent condition reviews affect rural housing supply, landlords and tenants.

Elsewhere, in January 2025, sustained lobbying by SLE led to a decisive Ministerial u-turn on proposals to ban the installation of wood burners in all new homes, as well as in qualifying conversions and renovations. The revised approach recognises the importance of bioenergy systems in rural areas.

SLE also played a key role in influencing the Shared Rural Network programme. We argued that the UK Government's original landmass-based coverage target risked damaging Scotland's most sensitive landscapes while failing to address connectivity gaps in "Total Not Spot" areas. Supported by partner organisations, our intervention resulted in a significant reduction in planned telecoms masts—from 258 to 44. We continue to press for reinvestment of these savings into improving coverage for underserved rural communities.

POLICY PROGRESS

LAND REFORM: DELIVERING RESULTS FOR MEMBERS

The **Land Reform (Scotland) Act** dominated our policy and lobbying work throughout 2025, with the Act receiving Royal Assent in December. SLE continued to position itself at the centre of the debate—ensuring that members' interests were clearly understood and effectively represented at every stage.

Building on our earlier oral evidence before parliamentary committees, we submitted additional written evidence at Stage 1, reinforcing our messages and responding to Scottish Land Commission advice. As the Bill progressed to Stage 2, we led an intensive period of engagement, providing weekly briefings to MSPs and engaging directly with officials and Ministers on more than 540 amendments. This proactive, solutions-focused approach ensured our voice was both credible and influential during detailed scrutiny.

At Stage 3, where nearly 400 further amendments were debated, our sustained engagement delivered tangible outcomes. We successfully opposed several of the most damaging proposals, including attempts to widen the scope of land affected by the legislation.

We also secured practical improvements to key provisions—most notably ensuring that open market rent for surplus housing can be properly reflected in agricultural holdings rent reviews.

Crucially, we secured Ministerial commitments to address various outstanding issues through secondary legislation. New regulation-making powers now provide a route to resolve key concerns identified by SLE, including the definition of a large landholding and the treatment of resumption compensation for limited duration tenancies.

This work was underpinned by close collaboration with our Land Reform Task Force—members whose expertise and insight ensured our work reflected members' interests. Regular updates throughout the year also kept the wider membership informed and engaged.

Land reform remains a central priority as the focus shifts to implementation. SLE will continue to lead on behalf of members—working to ensure that the final framework is more proportionate and supports a thriving rural economy.

POLICY WINS IN 2025

LOCAL VISITOR LEVY

SLE consistently argued that a flat-rate charge (e.g., £2 per room per night) would be far simpler for providers to administer. Although the original legislation opted for a percentage-based model, a subsequent Act has now amended this to allow a flat rate, making the system more workable and cost-effective.

INHERITANCE TAX

SLE, alongside other organisations, lobbied the UK Government to reverse proposed changes to Agricultural and Business Property Relief (APR and BPR). While further progress is still needed, the increase of APR allowances to £2.5m per individual and the continuation of spousal transfers provide some relief for family businesses. We continue to highlight the impacts on businesses.

NATIONAL PARKS

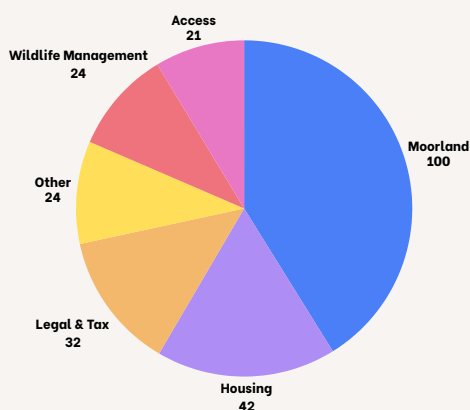
Working with members in the South West, SLE effectively raised concerns about the proposed National Park designation for Galloway. Our engagement with the reporter emphasised these concerns while acknowledging the area's need for economic development and investment. The proposal was ultimately not taken forward, and SLE continues to advocate for support for businesses in Galloway.

SPECIES RE-INTRODUCTIONS

Effective lobbying by SLE has highlighted the impact on rural businesses of species re-introduction, with specific issues of costs being incurred while dealing with White Tailed Eagles & Beaver damage. The First Minister agreed with these issues and stated "My government will not be reintroducing lynx, or indeed any other large carnivorous species in Scotland."

MEMBER QUERIES

We received **338** member queries in 2025 which our policy team help with. Below are the top 6 in 2025:



MOORLAND UPDATE



Ross Ewing
Director of Moorland
& Strategic Projects

2025 WAS ANOTHER DEFINING YEAR FOR MOORLAND MANAGEMENT IN SCOTLAND – WITH LEGISLATIVE CHANGES AND A RECORD-BREAKING YEAR FOR WILDFIRE.

Less than two years on from the passage of the Wildlife Management and Muirburn (Scotland) Act 2024, MSPs have made further changes to licensing frameworks for both grouse moors and muirburn - reinforcing the unpredictable nature of policy making in a contested, polarised environment.

SLE has been at the forefront of representing the interests of grouse moor owners and managers in the face of these changes. On muirburn, we were able to leverage positive changes which will make it easier to obtain licences when the scheme is commenced later this year. On grouse moor licensing, our representations ensured that damaging proposals to force the licensing of estate ownership boundaries were thrown out and key legal safeguards maintained.

In the midst of this legislative churn, **2025 was also a record year for wildfire in Scotland**. SLE has invested significant effort and resource in demonstrating the decisive role played by estates and gamekeepers in combating major incidents, including Scotland's largest recorded wildfire at Carrbridge and Dava. This has paved the way for wildfire prevention becoming a national priority for the Scottish Government, and the strongest possible recognition of the role gamekeepers play in wildfire response.

Alongside this, **SLE's moorland team responded to 124 individual member enquiries in 2025**—primarily concerning NatureScot's licensing functions. Our advice and expertise have helped members to deliver their objectives on the ground.

"The quality of the advice and help that we get from SLE's moorland team never ceases to amaze me, given that we are often involved with other members' support organisations elsewhere. There is no doubt in my mind that what SLE offers its members in this sphere is far and away above what we are able to get from any other members' organisation."

SLE Professional Member



OUR SUCCESSES IN 2025



Worked with MSPs to amend the muirburn licensing scheme by removing a presumption in favour of cutting, grazing and re-wetting over muirburn on peatland.



Persuaded Ministers to postpone the implementation of the muirburn licensing scheme on two separate occasions.



Published a major report on the Carrbridge-Dava wildfires, underscoring the fundamental importance of estates and gamekeepers in the containment effort, and elevating wildfire to become a national policy priority for the First Minister.



Influenced the development and legal interpretation of the new muirburn code.



Secured compensatory funding for estates and rural businesses who incurred damages to equipment while tackling the Carrbridge-Dave wildfire.



Worked with Ministers to defeat attempts by some MSPs to force the licensing of estate ownership boundaries.



Influenced changes brought forward by Scottish Ministers to the grouse moor licensing scheme, maintaining key legal safeguards.

WES UPDATE



Neil Gunn
WES Project Manager

*IN 2025, WILDLIFE ESTATES SCOTLAND (WES) SAW THE **FIRST EVER GOLD ACCREDITATION**, SUSTAINED POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT, AND GROWTH OF THE LEVEL 2 MEMBERSHIP.*

WES HIGHLIGHTS OF 2025 INCLUDE:

- **Scotland's first Gold accreditation award**, and the highest score achieved by any Wildlife Estates member across Europe.
- **5 WES events**, with **2 ministerial appearances**.
- **4 members** accredit at **Level 2** for the first time, and **3** reaccredit.
- The hectareage covered by our Level 2 members **increased by 22,000 ha**, meeting our growth objective for the year.
- Overall **WES membership increase by 10, to 220 holdings across Scotland**.



Sustaining political engagement and raising awareness of the exemplary sustainable land management that WES members do was a key focus of 2025. In April, a sold-out WES Assembly at Hopetoun House saw 100 delegates come together for a day of networking and discussions on data acquisition and collection, peatland restoration and landscape scale land management. The event was attended by Dr Alasdair Allan MSP, then Acting Minister for Climate Action and Energy. His contribution at the event provided impetus to ongoing work to streamline the 'Nature30' site recognition process for accredited WES members.

In July, Jim Fairlie MSP, the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity, presented WES members with accreditation awards at the Scottish Game Fair. Grosvenor's Reay Forest Estate received their Gold accreditation award at this event, alongside Finzean and Glenure estates. Reay Forest scored 91.75%, which is the highest score ever achieved by any Wildlife Estates member in Europe.

COUNTRIES UNDER THE WILDLIFE ESTATES SCHEME



This set the scene for a WES reception at the Scottish Parliament in early 2026.

Outside of these in-person events, 3 member webinars took place, giving the membership the opportunity to engage on the following:

- Habitat and species baselining.
- Bioacoustic monitoring.
- Policy updates on habitat and wildlife management.

Level 2 membership grew by 22,000 ha, with members from all over Scotland recognized for their commitment to Scotland's natural heritage in balance with other objectives. Scotland is second overall in terms of accredited hectareage in Europe. The work of our members was recognized and praised at the European Wildlife Estates Symposium in Paris in September. The progression of 'Trusted Operator' status for accredited members in Scotland was highlighted, with other countries seeking to follow suit. The European Wildlife Estates label also announced a review of the mandatory requirements that underpin national accreditation questionnaires, which is due to conclude by the end of 2026.



COMMS & EVENTS



Cameron Gillies
Head of External Affairs

SCALING OUR REACH, STRENGTHENING OUR IMPACT

Building on a record-breaking 2024 programme of high-quality engagement and growing influence, 2025 saw Scottish Land & Estates take its communications and events offering to the next level—delivering more, reaching further, and connecting deeper with members and stakeholders across rural Scotland.

Our digital and member communications continued to expand at pace, with **100 eNewsletters and events newsletters** keeping members informed, connected and ahead of the curve on the issues that matter most. Meanwhile, **four editions of LandBusiness** once again provided a platform for insight, innovation and member success stories—cementing its place as a must-read publication across the sector.

Audio content remained a powerful tool for engagement, with **seven episodes of the ScotLand Matters podcast** amplifying rural voices and showcasing the breadth of expertise within our membership. We also lead press coverage, reactively and proactively issuing 101 press releases in 2025 with our superb consultants, Media House.

Our events programme remained at the heart of SLE's offering. Flagship moments including the **Annual Conference, Annual General Meeting, and Annual Taxation Event** brought members together to share knowledge, shape policy discussions and strengthen networks. The ever-popular **Land Manager's Training Day and Helping it Happen Campaign and Awards Ceremony** continued to celebrate excellence and drive best practice across the sector.

We also invested heavily in future talent and accessibility. **Four Next Generation events and four webinars** ensured a blend of in-person and digital engagement, while **seven summer shows** extended our presence across Scotland's rural calendar.

On the ground, our commitment to regional engagement was stronger than ever, with **11 Walk & Talks and two Housing Roadshows alongside six Regional Receptions**—creating valuable opportunities for knowledge-sharing, collaboration and direct member support.

Together, this expanded programme reflects a clear ambition: to inform, connect and champion rural Scotland with greater energy and impact than ever before.

"A big part of the reason I am a member of SLE is to meet my peers, especially those who share the same problems and solutions. The SLE team, through the organisation of events, is the enabler of all of that peer group networking"

SLE Member, CE Region

2025 IN NUMBERS:



- 50 Weekly eNewsletters
- 50 Weekly events newsletters
- Member emails and surveys



- 4 Issues of LandBusiness magazine
- 4 Webinars
- 7 Episodes of the ScotLand Matters podcast



- Annual Conference
- Annual General Meeting
- Helping it Happen Campaign and Awards Ceremony
- Annual Taxation Event
- Land Managers' Training Day



- 4 Next Generation events
- 7 Summer Shows
- 11 Walk & Talks
- 4 Housing Roadshow events
- 6 Regional Receptions



REGIONAL UPDATE



Fiona Van Aardt
Head of Regions/Regional
Manager Highlands

DELIVERING FOR MEMBERS ACROSS SCOTLAND

The regional team has continued to play a vital role in delivering SLE's membership services on the ground, strengthening relationships, facilitating knowledge exchange, and ensuring that members' voices are represented at both local and national levels.



Throughout 2025, the team delivered **11 Walk & Talks – attended by almost 300 members** – providing practical, on-the-ground insights into key land management topics and creating valuable opportunities for peer learning and discussion.

Alongside this, over **40 additional regional events** including Next Generation, Peatland ACTION roadshows, and receptions at the summer shows **engaged more than 600 members**, reflecting the continued demand for high quality, accessible engagement across Scotland.

Regional Receptions once again proved to be a cornerstone of the events calendar. Across **six receptions, over 300 members attended**, benefiting from policy updates, expert insights and valuable networking opportunities with peers, stakeholders and the SLE senior team.

A standout event during the year was the **Forestry Walk & Talk and Conference**. The event was fully booked and brought together leading expertise from across the sector. Contributions included:

- Scottish Forestry, outlining the new **Resilience Route Map**
- Forest Research, presenting the **Recommended Productive Species list**
- James Jones & Sons, offering the **sawmillers' perspective**
- Scottish Woodlands, providing insight into **practical forest management**

The event was introduced and concluded by SLE, setting the strategic context and reinforcing the importance of forestry within the wider rural economy. A site visit to Castlemilk Estate complemented the conference, showcasing successful examples of alternative productive species in practice and grounding discussions in real-world application.

Beyond events, Regional Managers have continued to engage with members, politicians and key stakeholders through committee meetings, member hubs, consultations and local forums, ensuring that regional perspectives inform SLE's wider policy and advocacy work.

The strength of regional delivery in 2025 reflects not only the commitment of the regional team but also the continued engagement of members. By maintaining a strong local presence and creating opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing, SLE continues to support a resilient, informed and connected rural business community.

"I always leave a Walk and Talk with something new. They give me fresh perspectives, useful connections and better answers. That's no accident and it's the Regional Managers who make that possible."

SLE Member, CE Region



SCOTTISH LAND & ESTATES



ANNUAL REPORT 2025



FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR YEAR END 31 DECEMBER 2025



Sarah-Jane Laing
Chief Executive

STRONG FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE DELIVERY AND GROWING VALUE FOR OUR MEMBERS.

As Chief Executive, I am pleased to report that 2025 was a year of measured financial stability for Scottish Land & Estates, achieved during a period of continued political uncertainty, rising operating costs and ongoing pressure on the rural sector. Despite these challenges, our organisation delivered a strong programme of work, maintained high levels of member engagement and continued to invest in the services and policy representation that matter most to members.

Our total income grew to £1,918,008, up from £1,855,512 in 2024, reflecting the strength and resilience of our broad-based income model. Membership income remained the cornerstone of our finances at £1,599,808, supported by solid performance across publications, events, advertising and commercial partnerships.

I am particularly grateful to members and partners whose donations and support for our policy and project work helped us generate over £300,000 to deliver vital grouse moor management and land reform related activity.

Expenditure remained tightly controlled throughout the year. Administrative costs rose modestly largely due to increased staff capacity, inflationary pressures and the rising cost of delivering high-quality events and regional activity. We also invested in digital tools, vehicles and office improvements.

Our financial performance resulted in an operating surplus of £18,952 and a surplus for the financial year of £20,970. While lower than the previous year, this surplus aligns with our mid year forecast, and reflects deliberate investment in policy influence, member engagement and organisational capability. This is essential if we are to continue delivering strong, evidence-led representation and high quality member services.

BALANCE SHEET

We ended the year in a good financial position, with net assets rising to £456,106. Fixed assets increased to £220,570, and cash at bank totalled £252,286, with overall current assets of £653,884. Creditors remained at manageable and expected levels, consistent with normal operational cycles.

LOOKING AHEAD

In reviewing our year-end position, the Board has considered the 2026 operating budget and the draft five-year strategic and financial plan now nearing completion. This plan sets out clear aims to elevate influence and evolve service models to ensure that Scottish Land & Estates continues to deliver even greater value for members over the long term.

We are operating in a policy climate that remains demanding for rural businesses. The scope and scale of legislative change from land reform to energy, housing and environmental regulation underscores the vital role SLE plays in giving rural Scotland a strong, credible and evidence-driven voice. Our representative work continues to be recognised and valued, and our membership remains resilient, with continued growth across both traditional and emerging land-owning sectors.

Strategic partnerships remain key, providing stable income, and we are actively developing new commercial opportunities to support long-term sustainability. While some input costs continue to rise, these pressures are being partially mitigated through increased sponsorship, responsible pricing and ongoing operational discipline.

Based on our 2025 year-end results, future income expectations, and cash in bank including the modest growth in the Members' Support Fund, the Board is confident in the organisation's ongoing financial resilience. We therefore continue to prepare our financial statements on a going concern basis.



IMAGES FROM THE 2025 SLE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Income Statement
for the Year Ended 31 December 2025

	31/12/25		31/12/24
	£	£	£
REVENUE	1,918,008		1,855,512
Administrative expenses	<u>2,207,022</u>		<u>2,172,674</u>
	(289,014)		(317,162)
Other operating income	<u>307,966</u>		<u>359,683</u>
OPERATING SURPLUS	18,952		42,521
Income from fixed asset investments			
Interest receivable and similar income	1,219	3,101	
	<u>6,600</u>	<u>1,575</u>	
	7,819		4,676
	26,771		47,197
Interest payable and similar expenses	<u>1,027</u>		<u>513</u>
SURPLUS BEFORE TAXATION	25,744		46,684
Tax on surplus	<u>4,774</u>		<u>5,460</u>
SURPLUS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR	<u><u>20,970</u></u>		<u><u>41,224</u></u>

Scottish Land & Estates Limited (Registered number: SC257726)

Statement of Financial Position
31 December 2025

	31/12/25		31/12/24
	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS			
Property, plant and equipment	84,176		52,894
Investments	<u>136,394</u>		<u>124,786</u>
	220,570		177,680
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	401,598	270,747	
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>252,286</u>	<u>348,759</u>	
	653,884	619,506	
CREDITORS			
Amounts falling due within one year	<u>388,259</u>	<u>355,008</u>	
NET CURRENT ASSETS			
	265,625		264,498
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	486,195		442,178
CREDITORS			
Amounts falling due after more than one year	(25,960)		(1,867)
PROVISIONS FOR LIABILITIES	<u>(4,129)</u>		<u>(5,175)</u>
NET ASSETS	<u><u>456,106</u></u>		<u><u>435,136</u></u>
RESERVES			
Members Support Fund	136,394		124,786
Income and expenditure account	<u>319,712</u>		<u>310,350</u>
MEMBERS' FUNDS	<u><u>456,106</u></u>		<u><u>435,136</u></u>



FOR YOUR LIVELIHOOD. FOR YOUR LEGACY. FOR GENERATIONS.

Rural life is about finding balance. A respect for what's gone before, what's been done for generations, whilst finding room for what comes next. With over 60 years of arranging bespoke estates, household and farms insurance, financial services, and commercial and bloodstock insurance, we know the value of heritage and experience. Speak to us and you'll soon appreciate the breadth of our specialist knowledge and the depth of resources that are continually evolving for today's demands and your individual plans. Because your legacy, is yours to create, we're just here to facilitate.

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We're here to help rural
businesses in Scotland find
the right energy solutions.

At **SLE Energy Services**, we take a fresh approach to your business energy needs. From procurement and renewables solutions to energy efficiency and compliance support, we can help you reduce costs and meet sustainability goals.

Get in touch with us:

 0800 058 1953

 energyservices@scottishlandandestates.co.uk

HELPING IT HAPPEN AWARDS

The Helping it Happen Awards continue to be one of the most powerful platforms for showcasing the energy, innovation and impact of rural Scotland—bringing to life the stories that too often go untold.

In 2025, the awards reached new heights. The volume and quality of entries reflected a sector that is not only resilient, but ambitious—driven by people and organisations who are actively shaping the future of the countryside. From pioneering climate solutions and nature restoration to thriving rural businesses and community-led initiatives, the breadth of activity on display underlined the vital contribution rural Scotland makes to the national economy, environment and society.

What sets Helping it Happen apart is its inclusivity. Open to members and non-members alike, the awards capture the full diversity of rural endeavour—recognising everything from grassroots community action to large-scale innovation. It is this mix that makes the programme such a compelling snapshot of modern rural Scotland.



The awards also play a critical role in shifting perceptions. By highlighting real-world examples of success, they challenge outdated narratives and demonstrate the positive, forward-looking role of land-based businesses and rural communities. They provide a platform to celebrate progress, share best practice and inspire others to think differently about what rural Scotland can achieve.

Beyond the awards ceremony itself, Helping it Happen continues to grow as a year-round campaign—amplifying stories across media, digital channels and events, and ensuring that the voices of rural Scotland are heard more widely than ever before.

At a time of significant change and opportunity, the message is clear: rural Scotland is not standing still. It is evolving, innovating and delivering—and Helping it Happen is proud to champion those efforts every step of the way.

THE 2025 AWARD WINNERS WERE:

Award for Outstanding Contribution to Rural Scotland
Alistair Carmichael MP

Lifetime Achievement Award
Alastair Salvesen CBE

Conservation Award sponsored by [Levy & McRae](#)
[Bob Kindness supported by the River Carron Conservation Association](#)

Education Award sponsored by [Terra Magna](#)
[Ben McCallum](#)

Enhancing Our Environment through Land Management Award sponsored by [NatureScot](#)
[Joyce Campbell, Armadale Farm](#)

Good News Award sponsored by [Media House](#)
[Women in Wellies Podcast](#)

Innovation in Farming Award sponsored by [EQ Chartered Accountants](#)
[Digital Dairy Chain](#)

Iver Salvesen Award for Combatting Climate Change
sponsored by [Murray Beith Murray](#)
[MAKAR](#)

Rural Business Award sponsored by [Shepherd + Wedderburn](#)
[Natural Power](#)

Rural Property Award sponsored by [Bidwells](#)
[Wemyss and March Estates](#)

Rural Rising Star Award sponsored by [Scottish Woodlands](#)
[Sammi Kinghorn](#)

Tourism & Visitor Management Award sponsored by [GLM](#)
[Crawick Multiverse](#)

Working with Communities Award sponsored by [The Exiteers](#)
[Arrochar Community Hydro Society](#)

Heart Awards
[Aberdeenshire Highland Beef](#)
[Megginch Castle Orchard](#)





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