

Scottish Land & Estates (SLE) is a membership organisation representing landowners and land-based businesses across Scotland. We are supportive of much of the following motion by Mr Wightman MSP due to be debated in the Chamber on Tuesday, 12th March:

That the Parliament believes that a modern, democratic society requires open and transparent information on the ownership, use and value of land; commends the report published by Community Land Scotland (Towards Land Ownership Transparency); notes the ambition to create a Scottish Land Information System (SCOTLIS) to provide comprehensive information about land and property; understands that the target to register all land owned by Scotland's public bodies by 2019 is unlikely to be achieved; regrets that it remains difficult, time-consuming and expensive for citizens in Lothian and across Scotland to obtain land information, and notes the view that information about the ownership, use and value of land should be made freely available to the people of Scotland.

Transparent Information

Openness and transparency in land ownership are supported by SLE and have advantages for everyone. We have met with the Keeper and had much positive engagement and contact generally over the past few years with Registers of Scotland. We are fully supportive of land being covered by the Land Register, our members have assisted with voluntary registration and have also undertaken work with Registers of Scotland to raise awareness of services. Most larger private landowners have either gone through the land registration process or are currently undergoing voluntary land registration.

We are keen to ensure that there is transparency and have workable regulations in place which achieve this. It is important these are proportionate and easily understood, especially where there are sanctions for non-compliance.

ScotLIS

We are fully supportive of the ambitious plans to develop and enhance the role of ScotLIS and consider it will be a good resource for both professionals and lay persons. We have previously stated that making ScotLIS as comprehensive and user friendly as possible should be a key area for concentration.

Land Registration

As stated above SLE and our members have been working closely with Registers of Scotland. We share the disappointment that public bodies are not likely to meet the target set for land registration. Our members continue to play their active part in ensuring that their private land is land registered with a view to assisting Registers of Scotland meet that target.

Obtaining Land Information

We note the comments around information being "difficult, time-consuming and expensive" to obtain, but do also recognise the increase in land which is now land registered or in the process of being land registered, the development of Registers Direct and the introduction of new registers. While agreeing that information should be as "freely available" as possible, it is vital that processes

are properly resourced, costed and budgeted for. Alongside accessibility, accuracy is also vital so the information maintained is current and correct.

As well as the increased amount of land ownership being registered, there is much positive work being undertaken to increase the visibility and transparency around land use decision making, in line with the land reform legislation and specifically in connection with the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement.

Issued: March 2019