



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

HELPING RURAL SCOTLAND THRIVE

PEOPLE JOBS NATURE

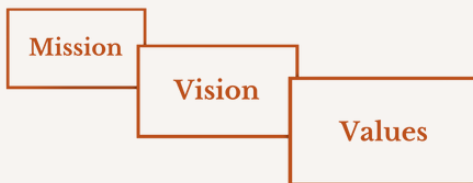
ABOUT SLE

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 2024 following a Board skills audit and open recruitment process we appointed four new Board members: Michael Upton, Alastair Orr Ewing, Angus Cheape and Patrick Colquhoun, who took on the role of Vice Chair (Policy) in January 2024.



Dee Ward
Chairman



Patrick Colquhoun
Vice Chair (Policy)



Sarah-Jane Laing
Chief Executive



Evelyn Channing
Director



Angus Cheape
Director



Andrew Douglas Miller
Director



Michael Home
Director



Lucy Laidlaw
Director



Derek Lewis
Director



Alastair Orr Ewing
Director



Michael Upton
Director



Laura Warendor
Director



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FOREWORD



Dee Ward
Chairman

2 024 brought significant political change with the end of the Bute House Agreement, the appointment of John Swinney MSP as First Minister and the UK General Election resulting in a change of Government. These brought both opportunities and challenges for SLE and our members, as we sought to build on existing political relationships as well as developing new ones. The change of focus from the Scottish Government, with economic growth at its heart, was welcomed and we saw evidence of the change of approach in policy areas such as housing.

The cost of doing business continued to increase over the year, largely due to the swingeing changes in the Chancellor's Autumn statement but also down to Scottish Government regulations. SLE was at the forefront of lobbying, and also of providing direct support and advice to affected businesses. **Our Rural Policy Prospectus** published at the Royal Highland Show gained cross party traction, and the work that we did on the **Wildlife Management & Muirburn (Scotland) Act 2024** was instrumental in delivering a reasonable and workable outcome for moorland owners and managers.

"I want to see SLE viewed as a business organisation, with landowners and land managers invited to the table when business leaders are consulted by government on economic growth. I also want to see a constructive, collegiate approach for delivery, with members viewed as partners. And I want to grow the membership further."

Sarah-Jane Laing, Chief Executive

The seemingly endless Land Reform journey continued in 2024 with the introduction of a **Land Reform Bill** which was promised as part of the Bute House Agreement and SNP Manifesto. It was disappointing that we once again seemed to return to a backwards looking land reform rhetoric driven by ideology rather than evidence of what is being delivered by current landowners in Scotland. SLE carried out substantive work on many fronts to influence the Bill and wider land reform work, and this continues in 2025. We are extremely grateful to members who have contributed to our land reform and grouse moor management projects as this vital work would not have been possible without your support. We will continue to fundraise for land reform in 2025 as the land reform journey is far from over!

Our political influence continued to grow across the year and we met with more politicians, produced more briefings, gained more references in parliamentary debates and achieved more legislative and policy success than previously recorded by the organisation in a single year.

In terms of member services we delivered another outstanding programme of events during the year, with 3,622 attendees at 48 events ranging from the annual conference to our ever popular walk and talks. Our presence in social, print, online and other media continued to grow, helped in part by our successful podcast **ScotLand Matters** as well as engaging content across all our social platforms.

Helping It Happen has gone from strength to strength, providing an unrivalled platform to celebrate and showcase rural success as well as one of our many routes of engagement with members regionally and nationally.

Next Generation activity continued to increase during 2024, with other regions building on the success of the South of Scotland group. As well as online events and in-person dinners, we also held a very well attended summer drinks reception in Whitehall.

We are in an extremely healthy place from a membership perspective, adding **60,000 hectares** of landowning membership alongside numerous professional and trade members across the year. There is still room for growth, and 2025 will see a continued focus on landowning membership to increase our reach and influence.

We will continue to do all we can to support members' business and property interests, and help you continue to deliver countless benefits for people, jobs and nature.
Together we will help rural Scotland thrive!



Sarah-Jane Laing
Chief Executive

SLE COLLEAGUES



Sarah-Jane Laing
Chief Executive



Tony Stevenson
Director of Operations



Stephen Young
Director of Policy



Ross Ewing
Director of Moorland



Eleanor Kay
Senior Policy Adviser
Agriculture & Climate Change



Jackie McCreery
Legal Adviser



Anna Gardiner
Policy Adviser
Rural Property



Simon Ovenden
Policy Adviser
Access & Visitor Management



Nadia Flaherty
Policy Adviser
Wildlife Management



Nathan Bryceland
Policy Adviser
Biodiversity & Woodlands



Jim Millar
Policy Adviser
Rural Communities



Nic MacLeod
Acting Policy Adviser



Cameron Gillies
Head of External Affairs



Donald Greig
Membership Communications Manager



Jane Laing
Events & Publications Coordinator



Anine Stevenson
Digital & Marketing Officer



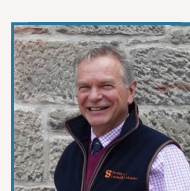
Fiona Van Aardt
Head of Regions



Clare Sturla
Area Manger South of Scotland
SE Regional Manager



Elena Hogarth
Regional Manager
Clydeside



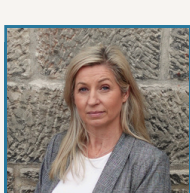
George Moore
Regional Manager
Dumfries & Galloway



Ruth White
Regional Manager
Central Region



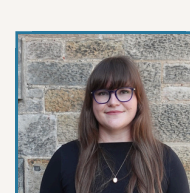
Neil Gunn
Wildlife Estates Scotland
Project Manager



Susana Williams
Business Development Manager



Michelle Nicholson
Business & Finance Manager



Ania Rytel-Dunn
PA to Chief Executive & Board

BUSINESS AND MEMBERSHIP UPDATE



Tony Stevenson
Director of Operations

CONTINUING OUR DRIVE TO INCREASE OUR ALREADY IMPRESSIVE MARKET PENETRATION, 2024 PROVED TO BE ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR.

With another year of net increase in membership numbers across all categories, we added over 60,000 hectares to the database plus a healthy pipeline going into 2025.

We continue to successfully recruit the now established Natural Capital and institutional landowners as well as private individuals entering the Scottish landowning community whose focus is on biodiversity enhancement and habitat restoration. Our member retention rate remains high, helped by our increased focus on next generation. With so many important policy topics being debated, such as land reform, housing and climate change, it is more important than ever that we have the right mix of members with real time experience to feed into these discussions. Having a diverse range of land management views represented in our membership creates a healthy environment for discussion and learning.

Our partnerships with Lycetts Insurance and SLE Energy Services (TrooCost) continue to serve our members well. Offering cost savings, expert advice and guidance to members, they also support SLE with regular marketing activity and sponsorship of events as well as supporting us at regional and national shows. Their involvement with SLE ensures their services are as accessible as possible for members.

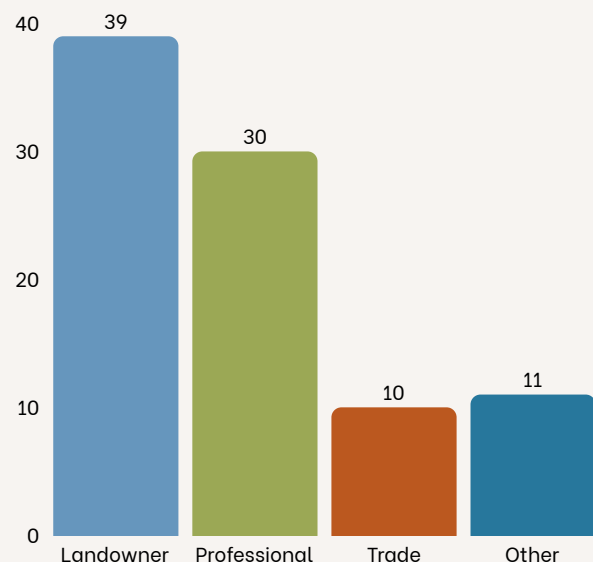
SLE's commercial offerings remain popular with demand outstripping supply in most cases. By the end of quarter one we had all but sold out all sponsorship opportunities for the year at both regional and national events. In addition, advertising in LandBusiness magazine is generally at capacity in advance of publication deadlines. While the revenue generated by our corporate members is crucial to the delivery of member services, their specialist knowledge and experience is vital in keeping the wider membership informed of the latest developments and ensuring these services are readily available.

OUR PARTNERS

Lycetts
Insurance Brokers and Financial Services

troo.
Scottish Land & Estates
ENERGY SERVICES

NEW MEMBERS 2024



"I hope you know how appreciative I am of all that you and the team at SLE have done for us."

- Landowning member, South East Region

SELECTION OF NEW MEMBERS IN 2024

Ellemford Estate

AUCH ESTATE

BOLFRACKS
HOUSE & GARDENS

Pollution Watch UK

MOZAIC EARTH

FARMING PARTNERS

MAKERSTOUN



chirrup.ai

Simpson & Brown
Architecture Heritage Consultancy Archaeology



POLITICAL UPDATE



Cameron Gillies
Head of External Affairs

2024 WAS A **RECORD-BREAKING YEAR** FOR SLE IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS. WE MET WITH MORE POLITICIANS, PRODUCED MORE BRIEFINGS, GAINED MORE REFERENCES IN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES AND ACHIEVED MORE **LEGISLATIVE SUCCESS** THAN PREVIOUSLY RECORDED BY THE ORGANISATION IN A SINGLE YEAR.

The SLE team has positioned itself as a leading voice on rural affairs in Scotland, with a reputation for high quality policy work that brings ideas to the table to address the challenges facing rural businesses and communities. We have built this reputation in political circles through our political briefings, regular in-person engagement with MSPs and MPs, and a high-profile presence at key events in the rural calendar.

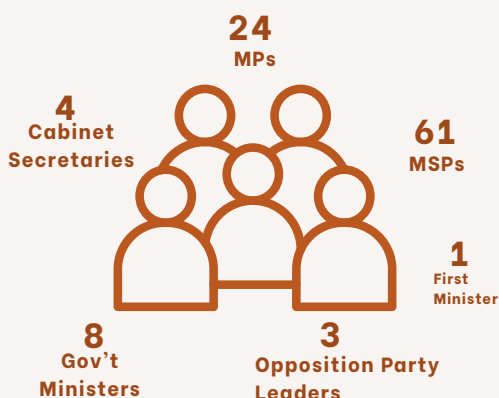
Following a tumultuous start to the year in Holyrood which precipitated the end of the much-maligned Bute House Agreement in April, The Scottish Green Party exited government in dramatic fashion, and in so doing, dragged First Minister Humza Yousaf with them in the fallout.

After a short campaign, John Swinney succeeded Mr Yousaf as First Minister after his main competition for the post, Kate Forbes, stepped aside to take up a post as his deputy, placing two rural MSPs at the head of the Scottish Government for the first time.

After a period of settling in, the SLE team met with the new First Minister in summer to outline the role government can play in supporting the rural sector. A short while later, we published our [policy prospectus](#), Rural Reset – ‘Policy Choices, Rural Voices’, which sets out SLE’s policy platform and provides politicians and decision makers with the practical steps they can take to help rural Scotland thrive. Our work has featured heavily in political debate, changing the narrative on several issues and embedding calls for rural impact assessments on government policy.

2024 saw the election of the UK’s first Labour Government in 14 years. In the run up, SLE produced a manifesto document which set out our key asks for the next UK Government, following this up by hosting our own rural hustings event in Perth.

IN 2024 WE MET:



Since then, a series of decisions in the new Labour Government’s first Budget has placed a significant burden on the rural sector, forming the basis of our involvement in the industry-wide campaign to stop the Family Farm Tax.

As we build towards the 2026 Holyrood election, it is more important than ever for SLE to continue growing its political profile and influence. As manifestos begin to be written, and more key rural legislation comes down the line in the form of Land Reform, the Natural Environment Bill and the Housing Bill, we are absolutely committed to ensuring that rural businesses across Scotland have their voices heard.

THIS YEAR...



31

briefing papers produced for politicians – more than the previous 3 years combined



40

mentions in the Holyrood Debating Chamber



824

appearances in separate news articles online and in regional and national press



9

Members of the SLE team gave evidence to parliamentary committees



25

successful amendments contributed to key legislation

POLICY FOREWORD

As the representative body for a huge number of rural businesses, covering almost all aspects of the rural economy, SLE has continued to strive to give a voice to an often-forgotten section of the economy.

SLE always has been a member-led organisation and we continue to work with members to steer our work to ensure not only that your voice is heard, but that we have a sound understanding of what you need now and for the future. In policy terms this takes the form of numerous policy development groups, both on specific topics such as land reform or housing and in our more general National Policy Group, which oversees our policy position development along with our lobbying and information work. These groups are made up of diverse sets of members. We also have dedicated legal and tax groups, with senior professionals from our membership, who provide expert guidance on what are often complex issues.

The range of topics we work on is something that no other organisation does, including detailed work on a smaller number of specialist areas. SLE truly represents the depth of activity within our membership. As you will see in the following policy pages, we have provided a very brief summary of just some of the key areas on which we have continued to work, including Land Reform, Agriculture, Housing and Access issues. More information on the full range of work we undertake, along with details of our team's specialist areas, is available on our website.

Tax was a key - difficult - topic for rural Scotland in 2024, including changes to inheritance tax and capital gains tax, as well as to treatment of double cab pickups, combined with a raft of other business costs rising. SLE has sought to work with other organisations to put forward a body of evidence not only to highlight the potential damage of tax changes, but also to promote the huge contribution rural business makes to the economy, socially and to the environment.

While much of our work to represent the interests of members politically is more high profile, we also invest considerable time in helping members with our on-call policy support services, advising on a huge range of policy issues. Not surprisingly this often follows the path of ever-changing legislation and its interpretation. Therefore, in 2024 there was major demand for this on housing, moorland, taxation, land reform and agriculture.

The SLE policy team is extremely well respected across the rural sector, as well as politically. We have a diverse skillset within the team and our advisers have a huge amount of knowledge and experience and are here to help your business.



Patrick Colquhoun
Vice Chair (Policy)

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

POLICY WINS IN 2024



TAX

APR definition adjusted by HMRC to include enviro contracts with public bodies – further work to look at nongovernment contracted land use.



LAND REFORM

Many elements we had concerns about not included in the bill: Land value tax and succession in the main. Promising initial meetings with new SLC chair Mike Russell.



NATURAL CAPITAL

Our evidence to the net zero committee on natural capital investment was well received. Also SLE members invited onto panel.



HOUSING

New proposals for rent controls are less tight in terms of limits on increases. And Short Term Let changes mean operators can let properties for specific periods without a license.

POLICY PROGRESS



Stephen Young
Director of Policy

2024 WAS ANOTHER PRODUCTIVE YEAR FOR THE POLICY TEAM, MITIGATING AND OVERCOMING CHALLENGES AS WELL AS HIGHLIGHTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEMBERS.



AGRICULTURE

Agriculture remains one of our key policy areas.

In July 2024, the Agriculture & Rural Communities (Scotland) Act gained Royal Assent, providing the powers for Scotland to develop its own post-CAP agricultural support and accompanying regulation. SLE worked hard during the bill process to establish workable legislation which gave clear guidance and strategy for the industry to move forward

There were a number of key areas of the Act in which SLE lobbying improved the legislation, including a requirement to support sustainable food systems and supply chains, as well as ensuring the Rural Support Plan has regard for the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act, placing food production at the centre of agricultural policy. More detail will emerge with secondary legislation in due course.

SLE also successfully put forward amendments to add a statutory duty for Scottish Ministers to have regard for rural land use and biodiversity and strengthened the definition of soil health and natural water management in the Bill.

Importantly SLE work also ensured that “deer and game farming” were included in the recognised activity in the Bill and that venison was included in the list of products which may receive support.

Beyond legislation work, SLE continued to support members’ interests, providing a voice on a host of stakeholder groups as well as a wealth of information through Walk and Talks, webinars and information sheets.



RURAL PROPERTY

The end of the Bute House Agreement marked a pivotal moment to reset the relationship between the private rented sector and the government. With Minister for Housing, Paul McLennan MSP overseeing all housing matters, we successfully advocated for the private sector's crucial role as housing providers in rural Scotland.

Throughout 2024, SLE's efforts ensured that emergency legislation evolved from a rent freeze to a 3% cap. As rent control legislation progresses through parliament in the Housing (Scotland) Bill, SLE has highlighted the running costs of providing compliant rural rented housing. This advocacy helped secure government commitment for rent controls to account for inflation, setting a rent cap at the Consumer Price Index plus 1%, up to a maximum of 6%. The tireless work by SLE in this area has involved taking Ministers and officials to visit rural housing and meet our members, demonstrating their vital role in providing housing.

In 2024, SLE also persuaded the government to reverse the regulations that banned the installation of bioenergy heating systems (including wood burners) in new homes. SLE argued that the regulation would have disproportionately impacted rural residents, who are more susceptible to extended power cuts and have fewer heating options. In meetings with the Minister for Climate Action, Alasdair Allan MSP, and his team, SLE, with the help of key members, also illustrated the role of the forestry sector in the biomass industry and the importance of wood burners in alleviating rural fuel poverty. A temporary review led to a permanent revision of the New Build Heat Standard, ensuring the ongoing use of bioenergy heating systems.



SHARED RURAL NETWORK

Along with other stakeholders SLE has worked with the new UK Government to highlight opportunities to make better use of public money on the Shared Rural Network. This has led to a rationalisation of the number of masts required, along with proposing a more effective approach to ensure that there is provision where it is needed, combined with greater sensitivity for the natural environment and working businesses.

POLICY PROGRESS



LAND REFORM

SLE was again the lead organisation representing property rights in Scotland, working with our member taskforce to ensure that our positions and vision for the future of land in Scotland are clear. In March 2024 the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill was published and we have been working on this tirelessly since then.

Much of the debate has centred on the scale of land ownership and we have undertaken extensive work to highlight the benefits of land management at scale. We commissioned and published research, *Land: the Role of Scale in Delivering a Just Transition*, which was formally launched in the Scottish Parliament, supported by Kate Forbes MSP. Completed by BiGGAR Economics, the research adds to the growing evidence base that large-scale land use is essential for delivering several public policy targets: woodland creation, peatland restoration,

onshore wind generation, investment in nature restoration and housing.

SLE also carried out extra fundraising from the membership to ensure we are able to defend property rights robustly and with sound evidence. This has included taking legal opinion when required to fully understand the implications of the proposals and how they interact with the European Convention for Human Rights.

The Bill continued to make its way through parliament in 2024 and SLE provided a raft of evidence, countless briefings and updates to Ministers and MSPs, including visits to estates for individual MSPs, as well as the Net Zero Energy & Transport Committee as the lead Committee for the bill. We have also provided regular member updates and information to ensure everyone is kept up to date.



ACCESS

With the 20th anniversary of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code on the horizon, SLE has been a leading voice in calling for an opportunity to refresh the code, along with looking at ensuring it is fit for purpose. Changes in technology, in particular, have been significant since the code was first created, with equipment that hadn't been invented at the time, such as e-bikes and drones, now commonly used. SLE has worked with other stakeholders and government agencies to seek to have this review and has explained the changing ways in which the public wishes to take access in rural areas.

POLICY WINS IN 2024

FLY TIPPING



SLE played a lead role in developing the national litter and flytipping strategies, helping to reduce instances and recognise the impact on land managers.

ACCESS



Ongoing work to review SOAC is still making progress. Potential too for funding to come from Local Visitor Levy for resources.

CROFTING



Future consultation takes on board many of the SLE suggestions on how to make the system work better.

MOORLAND UPDATE



Ross Ewing
Director of Moorland

2024 WAS ONE OF THE MOST CONSEQUENTIAL YEARS EVER FOR MOORLAND MANAGEMENT AND GROUSE SHOOTING IN SCOTLAND.

The passage of the Wildlife Management and Muirburn Act on 30 April 2024 introduced new licensing schemes for grouse moors, muirburn and wildlife traps, as well as introducing enhanced powers for the Scottish SPCA to investigate wildlife crime and imposing a ban on the use of snares.

In the face of what was a challenging piece of draft legislation, SLE was consistently at the forefront of protecting our members' interests. Through a combination of policy expertise, sectoral leadership and robust legal opinion, SLE was able to successfully lobby to improve the key provisions of the Bill.

Despite the hard-won safeguards included in the Act, NatureScot made an error in interpreting the Act's provisions in respect of the land to which grouse moor licences relate. After initially forcing the licensing of estate ownership boundaries, SLE successfully challenged NatureScot's decision making which resulted in the modification of grouse moor licences.

Throughout this significant change, SLE has endeavored to keep our valued moorland contributors and donors up to date. In June we convened our inaugural moorland conference – SLE's second biggest event of 2024 – to provide critical updates about what the legislation would mean for grouse moor owners and managers.

"I would just like to add our thanks to the team at Scottish Land & Estates who worked tirelessly to limit the damage that the original grouse moor licensing proposals thought up by the Scottish Government would have done to grouse shooting in Scotland."

- Professional Member



OUR SUCCESSES IN 2024



Securing an independent right to appeal to the Sheriff Court in situations where NatureScot modifies, suspends, revokes or refuses a grouse moor licence. This provides licence holders with a critical legal safeguard and the opportunity to challenge a decision by NatureScot based on fact and law.



Securing powers for a Sheriff hearing an appeal to make 'interim orders', which means a grouse moor licence that has been suspended or revoked could be reinstated, pending determination of the appeal.



Increasing the duration of grouse moor licences from one year to up to five years. Following NatureScot's initial decision to impose three-year licences, we then successfully made the case for five-year licences, citing the fundamental importance of providing businesses with certainty.



Removing a draconian power which could have seen grouse moor and muirburn licences suspended in situations where an investigation was ongoing but where NatureScot was not satisfied of a relevant offence having been committed.



Averting a ban on muirburn on peatland habitats by making a strong case for the benefits, especially when it comes to habitat conservation, biodiversity and wildfire mitigation.



Ensuring that, amid ongoing pressure from some MSPs to close the muirburn season early, the overall duration of the season was maintained. This means that the season will now run from 15 September until 31 March.

WES UPDATE



Neil Gunn
Project Manager

2024 SAW WES MEMBERS RECOGNIZED AS “TRUSTED OPERATORS” AND 6 NEW MEMBERS ACHIEVE LEVEL 2 ACCREDITATION.

The Wildlife Estates Scotland (WES) accreditation scheme recognises best practice and encourages continuous improvement in relation to conservation and biodiversity initiatives, irrespective of land use.

WES sits under the wider Wildlife Estates label, set up by the European Landowners' Organization in 2004. Scotland is one of 19 countries across Europe that operate schemes under this label, making it a leading part of a wide and diverse network.



715,000 acres of land across Scotland is currently accredited under Level 2 of the scheme. A further **2,059,160** acres of land is registered at Level 1. While not accredited, WES Level 1 members are working towards the ‘gold standard’ of Level 2 accreditation and have agreed to a series of commitments regarding management and governance. **Taken together, Level 1 and Level 2 WES membership in Scotland currently covers an area more than double the size of the Cairngorms National Park.**

2024 saw 6 WES members re-accredit at Level 2 (re-accreditation is necessary every 5 years). The data that re-accredited members are collecting is invaluable, as it directly informs management decisions and helps member estates to prioritize conservation initiatives.

COUNTRIES UNDER THE WILDLIFE ESTATES SCHEME



WES held its annual Assembly at Kilgraston School which was warmly welcomed.

The natural capital subject matter continued to draw significant interest and there was great enthusiasm for the format and the speakers, in particular the member case studies. 110 guests attended and gave the event a rating of 4.4 overall*

DEVELOPMENT OF “TRUSTED OPERATOR” STATUS

The team supporting WES worked hard throughout 2024 to develop the benefits associated with “Trusted Operator” status. Notably, following positive engagement with the Scottish Government and NatureScot, alignment has been recognised between WES Level 2 accreditation and the Statutory Code of Practice for Grouse Moor Management, with WES Level 2 accreditation now officially recognised as a means to monitor compliance with the Code.

Work is also ongoing to promote WES Level 2 accredited land as the logical starting point for the Scottish Government’s aspiration to designate Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs), to help it meet its target of protecting 30% of land, rivers, wetland and sea by 2030. Securing a role for WES in the OECM pilot is a key objective for 2025.



COMMS & EVENTS



Cameron Gillies
Head of External Affairs

*THE COMMS & EVENTS TEAM DELIVERED AND SUPPORTED A WIDE RANGE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND EVENTS IN 2024, WELCOMING **3622 ATTENDEES** WHO GAVE OUR EVENTS AN AVERAGE RATING OF **4.4 STARS**. ★★★★★*

The Comms and Events team has also been working closely with the Business team, liaising with sponsors and commercial partners, managing the comms database, supporting Wildlife Estates Scotland and maintaining the SLE website.

With legislation and government policy providing a key focus for the whole organisation, the Comms Team has been at the heart of our response to political developments, working with our partners at Media House to produce 73 high quality releases for press and wider media, publication work including a new policy prospectus and social media posts aimed at capturing political narratives on specific issues.

Our digital communications across social media platforms have been standardised with a more consistent approach to corporate identity, and a more regular schedule of content delivered by our Digital and Marketing Officer. The result of these changes led to growth across all of our key platforms. Our LinkedIn following gathered over 1,000 new followers in 2024, with growth in the hundreds also seen on our X and Instagram profiles.

"A big thank you to the SLE team for all the energy and hard work put into organising this event."

Professional Member

Our Membership Communications Manager has also worked to add greater consistency to our weekly eNews Publication, working with the Head of External Affairs to deliver two weekly columns in each publication on coverage of SLE in the News and a political update for rural businesses.

Our quarterly LandBusiness publication continues to go from strength to strength, with more regular columns covering each quarter's key developments, as well as a host of fantastic case studies shining a light on the excellent work our members are undertaking on a range of topics across Scotland. We are delighted that another four editions of this much-valued members magazine landed on doorsteps across Scotland and on the desks of our key political and industry stakeholders in 2024.



2024 IN NUMBERS:



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



- 4 issues of LandBusiness magazine
- 11 webinars
- 8 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
- 6 Summer Shows
- 20 Walk & Talks and Peatland Roadshows
- 6 Regional Receptions



REGIONAL UPDATE



Fiona Van Aardt
Head of Regions

DELIVERING OUR MEMBERSHIP SERVICES AND REPRESENTATIVE WORK THROUGHOUT SCOTLAND

The members of the SLE regional team provide a focus within their regions and also organise events, regional stakeholder engagement and visits from politicians. They keep the wheels of the SLE network well oiled.



REGIONAL EVENTS AND MEETINGS

Over 450 members attended in-person regional events in 2024, including:

- our very popular Walk & Talks
- peatland Restoration roadshow events organised in partnership with Peatland ACTION
- two very successful webinars with South of Scotland members on Regional Land Use Frameworks and the SoS Tourism Strategy.

Regional Managers also joined SLE members and stakeholders at key meetings and events throughout the year, including member clusters and hubs, Scottish Land Commission good practice workshops, Cairngorms National Park Authority Land Managers Forum, river openings and more.

“The run through of SLE activities is very useful - a staggering amount of matters that SLE keeps tabs on. Very well put over.”



2024 REGIONAL RECEPTIONS

The annual Regional Receptions are a highlight of the calendar.

- 5 events held over 2 weeks
- Engaged with 326 members (20% increase on 2023)
- All receptions rated 4.5 stars or above

The regional receptions provide a key annual round-up:

- highly valued SLE political and policy updates
- Q&A with the senior team
- valuable insights on key themes, from Scottish Business & Tourism and Private Finance in Nature Restoration to Land Reform and Business Diversification
- networking with members and SLE colleagues



POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Central Regional Committee welcomed an MSP to each of its quarterly committee meetings and there was vital engagement in Dumfries & Galloway on the Galloway National Park consultation.



With You. We grow together.

We're not just accountants, many of us are also farmers. We really have walked a mile in your boots. As the leading providers of accountancy, taxation, and succession planning in the rural sector, our team are well equipped to guide you through the diverse scenarios your business may encounter.



Part of the **SUMER** Group

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FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR YEAR END 31 DECEMBER 2024



Sarah-Jane Laing
Chief Executive

A STRONG PERFORMANCE IN NEW BUSINESS AND MEMBERSHIP RETENTION, ALONGSIDE ROBUST OPERATIONAL FINANCIAL CONTROL.

The income statement & the statement of financial position on page 15 contain information extracted from the full statutory Directors' Report and Financial Statements of Scottish Land & Estates Ltd, for the year ended 31 December 2024.

Our year end financial performance was as expected and aligned with the planned budget and revised forecasts resulting from in year financial decisions

2024 saw a strong performance in terms of new business across membership, advertising and income in tandem with excellent membership retention and a growth in event fee income. Commission income from SLE Energy and Ford partnership, along with our Lycetts and Historic Houses Scotland strategic relationships, also contributed to the 6% increase in income from 2024.

Our members supported fund performed a little better during 2024 providing us with a gain of just over £8,000 gains. Members continued to provide donations for our project work on land reform and moorland management, for which the SLE Board and staff team are very grateful.

We continued to monitor our administrative expenses closely and renegotiated a number of service provision agreements in areas such as IT and telephone. We agreed a new lease for our office in Musselburgh and made some capital expenditure investment in the office facility.

We ended the financial year with an operating surplus of circa £47,000 and also carried forward around £200,000 of project funding for our ongoing moorland and land reform work.

GOING CONCERN

The UK and Scottish Governments' Programmes for Government continue to have significant implications for members and the visible and valued representative work of the organisation, along with continued high quality service provision and direct member engagement, will help to maintain the high levels of member retention and recruitment. We have renewed or continued strategic partnerships which provide ongoing income and are exploring other commercial opportunities.

We continue to see increases in input costs, especially for delivery of membership events, but these will continue to be offset by income from increased delegate ticket prices and increased sponsorship levels. We are taking steps to reduce increased employer National Insurance liability via the provision of increased salary sacrifice options. Based on the 2025 budget and future financial plan, the directors believe that it remains appropriate to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis.



IMAGES FROM THE 2024 SLE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Income Statement
for the Year Ended 31 December 2024

	31/12/24		31 /1 2/23
	£	£	£
REVENUE		1,855,512	1,680,149
Administrative expenses		2,172,674	2,074,565
		(317,162)	(394,416)
Other operating income		359,683	408,531
OPERATING SURPLUS		42,521	14,115
Income from fixed asset investments			
Interest receivable and similar income	3,101		2,515
	1,575		573
		4,676	3,088
		47,197	17,203
Interest payable and similar expenses		513	752
SURPLUS BEFORE TAXATION		46,684	16,451
Tax on surplus		5,460	1,755
SURPLUS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR		41,224	14,696

Scottish Land & Estates Limited (Registered number: SC257726)

Statement of Financial Position
31 December 2024

	31/12/24		31 /1 2/23
	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS			
Property, plant and equipment		52,894	32,963
Investments		124,786	115,310
		177,680	148,273
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	270,747		177,521
Cash at bank and in hand	348,759		348,124
	619,506		525,645
CREDITORS			
Amounts falling due within one year	355,008		270,446
NET CURRENT ASSETS		264,498	255,199
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		442,178	403,472
CREDITORS			
Amounts falling due after more than one year		(1,867)	(6,160)
PROVISIONS FOR LIABILITIES		(5,175)	(3,400)
NET ASSETS		435,136	393,912
RESERVES			
Members Support Fund		124,786	115,310
Income and expenditure account		31 0,3 50	278,602
MEMBERS' FUNDS		435,136	393,912



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Scotland find the right energy solutions.**

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Electricity



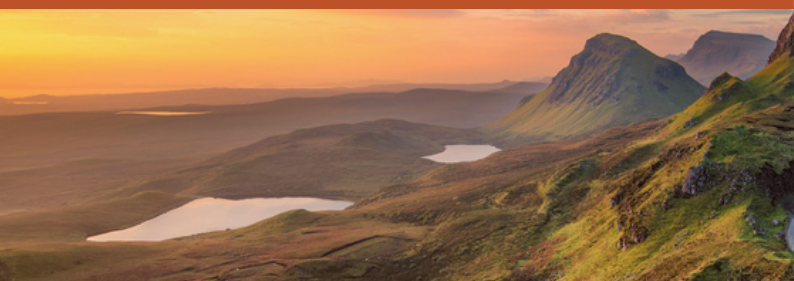
Gas



Water



Renewables



0800 058 1953



energyservices@scottishlandandestates.co.uk

HELPING IT HAPPEN AWARDS

Pausing to focus on all the good things that are going on around us is something we ought to do more often. That's why we make a point of doing it each year for our Helping it Happen Awards.

2024 was the 8th year of the awards and, as is the case every year, it was a joy to read and learn about all the positive, proactive individuals, groups and businesses making a difference all over Scotland.

As ever, we had an array of hugely impressive finalists to honour on the awards evening, which was once again sponsored by NatureScot, all of whom are having a transformative effect on their communities, environment and local economy.



From highly motivated individuals who regularly volunteer to large businesses whose thoughtful approach is all about creating a better future, we are lucky to count all of these inspirational people and organisations as Scottish Land & Estates members and/or committed exponents of Scottish rural life.

Nominees for the Helping it Happen Awards don't have to be SLE members. Anyone can be nominated by anybody for any of the awards, so long as they fulfil the individual criteria of each award category.

THE 2024 AWARD WINNERS WERE:

Award for Outstanding Contribution to Rural Scotland
Drew McFarlane-Slack MBE

Conservation Award sponsored by [Anderson Strathern](#)
[Grosvenor Reay Forest Estate](#) Project Laxford

The Education Award sponsored by [Hampden & Co](#)
[Estates that Educate](#) Scotland's Regional Moorland Groups

Enhancing Our Environment through Land Management Award sponsored by [NatureScot](#)
[Glenfalloch Estate](#)

Innovation in Farming Award sponsored by [EQ Chartered Accountants](#)
[Angus Growers](#)

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

The Rural Business Award sponsored by [Shepherd + Wedderburn](#)
[Claxton's Whisky](#)

The Rural Property Award sponsored by [Bidwells](#)
[Glengorm Farming Partnership](#)

The Rural Rising Star Award sponsored by [Scottish Woodlands](#)
[Wallace Currie](#)

The Tourism & Visitor Management Award sponsored by [GLM](#)
[David Hope-Jones](#)

The Working with Communities Award sponsored by [Media House](#)
[Ballantrae Rural Initiative Care in the Community \(BRICC\)](#)

Judges' Commendations

- [Josh Donaldson](#)
- [Sustainable Kirriemuir](#)
- [Propagate](#)



