Local Government and Regeneration Committee
Regeneration Inquiry
Submission from Scottish Land and Estates

General

- Scottish Land & Estates fully recognises the importance of regeneration in both urban and rural Scotland. Regeneration can act as a driver for sustainable growth, bring communities together, increase sense of ownership within communities and allow places and communities to 'rebrand' themselves to promote social, economic and environmental benefits.

- Scottish Land & Estates has recently responded to two consultations which we believe align with the remit of this Inquiry. Our submission on the Scottish Government’s consultation on a Proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill¹ and our evidence to the Land Reform Review Group’s call for views² should be read in conjunction with our written evidence.

- Although the wider objectives of regeneration will be similar, it is important to note that rural areas face different challenges to urban areas when tackling regeneration. Due to reliance in many areas on traditional industries and the dispersed nature of rural areas, projects have been overlooked in the past. We feel that innovative mechanisms for promoting community engagement and sourcing funding have to be carefully considered as well as overcoming physical barriers such as a lack of broadband infrastructure which often restricts potential development.

Response to specific issues

- Strategy and policy issues – There has to be consistency between different policies and strategies. Delivery of regeneration is extremely reliant on an effective planning system.

- Partnership working – Partnership working should not be limited to public bodies and third sector groups. The private sector is a key partner in regenerating rural areas and should not be overlooked. There are already a number of toolkits available which aid community planning and should be considered in detail.

- Practical issues – Resources to facilitate Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) and access to funding are seen as key practical issues when considering regeneration projects. Community engagement is only successful when there is buy-in from all parties.

Scottish Land & Estates is a member organisation that uniquely represents the interests of both land managers and land-based businesses in rural Scotland. Scottish Land & Estates has over 2,500 members with interests in a great variety of land uses and welcomes the opportunity to submit our views in response to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee’s Inquiry.

General response:

Scottish Land & Estates recognises that it is often difficult to put regeneration in a rural context. The Regeneration Strategy sets out a number of focus areas aimed at providing support to

² http://www.scottishlandandestates.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2254&Itemid=232
rural communities. Since the Regeneration Strategy was published in 2011 all of the actions identified have been taken forward, however we feel that there is still progress to be made.

Scottish Land & Estates welcomes the reference made in the Regeneration Strategy to the role of the private sector and we seek to facilitate increased engagement between the private and public sectors. Unfortunately we feel that there have been occasions where the contribution made by the private sector has been overlooked. For example, the private rented sector has proved on many occasions that it can deliver affordable rented housing at less cost to the taxpayer than funding through the social housing sector. Despite this evidence, the option of using the private rented sector to make better use of public funds has been more or less disregarded. This is of particular concern in rural areas where the private sector is often the main rented housing provider.

Linked to the comment above, we feel that housing is vital to regeneration, particularly in rural areas where the housing stock is intrinsically linked to employment and in turn sustaining the local economy. If there is not a supply of affordable housing then regeneration and wider benefits will not occur. There is also a need for rented accommodation as it allows greater flexibility than owner occupation.

As part of its evidence gathering exercise, Scottish Land & Estates would encourage the Committee to consider 'Rural Scotland in Focus' published by Scottish Agricultural College (now the Scottish Rural University College). The 2012 report sets out the economic, social and demographic characteristics of rural Scotland, how these are changing and the implications of these changes for policy and practice. Topics covered in the report include rural housing, the role of towns and the private and third sectors, high speed broadband provision and the implications of a 'low carbon' future. This publication identifies a number of case studies linked to regeneration that the Committee may wish to review.

Scottish Land & Estates believes that effective community planning is central to delivering the key aims of enabling more people in Scotland to have a stake in the ownership, governance, management and use of land. In December 2012, the Scottish Government published guidance to CPPs on single outcome agreements. Scottish Land & Estates was involved in the development of some of the previous SOAs and is pleased that lessons learned during the development and delivery of the SOAs has been taken on board and will be used to improve the process going forward. The next SOAs will be developed in early 2013, and in our response to the Land Reform Review Group, we suggest that an evaluation of this process is carried out after this to inform any possible recommendations regarding community planning and local decision making.

Scottish Land & Estates has previously recommended that an initiative should be developed similar to the Prince of Wales’ Trust’s Seeing is Believing programme. This would allow community members and community planning partners to witness first hand what has been achieved and what is possible in their own areas.

Scottish Land & Estates actively encourages members to include a community and stakeholder engagement policy within their overall long term estate plan. A recent member survey found that as well as the wealth of formal and informal engagement taking place, 13% of those responding already have a formal community engagement plan in place. We will be undertaking work during 2013 to increase this.

Response to specific questions:

Strategy and Policy Issues

Question 1: How can the linkage between the various strategies and policies related to regeneration be improved?
There are a number of government policies and strategy documents which seek to aid and promote regeneration across Scotland. It is important that there is consistency in these strategies to ensure that they are deliverable on a local scale and do not lead to conflict, duplication or unnecessary barriers.

**Example: Scottish Housing Strategy versus UK fiscal policy**

Housing targets in which the private sector plays a significant role in achieving pitched against the UK fiscal policy which seeks, through taxation (CGT and IHT) to curtail the activities of private sector landlords which other businesses are given relief for transfers of ownership between the generations.

Scottish Land & Estates would encourage greater engagement with the private sector to assist in development of strategies at both national and local levels, and also in delivery of the strategic aims and objectives.

The role of the planning system in achieving regeneration can not be understated. Scottish Land & Estates believes that the key policy driver for regeneration in Scotland should be the Scottish Planning Policy which is currently being reviewed. Emphasis must be placed on enabling development to occur and to promote regeneration in both urban and rural areas.

We feel that it is particularly important that local planning authorities actively engage with the community when developing their Local Development Plan. Scottish Land & Estates believes that effective community engagement leads to better development plans and subsequently a smoother planning process when applications come forward.

Community engagement and interaction with land use decisions are increasingly recognised in public policy. The Land Use Strategy places emphasis on the need for all communities to be better connected to the land, and positively influencing land use. It is imperative that communities in their totality move towards a more strategic approach to land use, and focus more on a vision for their communities rather than only being involved in supporting or objecting to individual projects or planning applications.

**Question 3:** Are we achieving the best value from investment in this area? If not, how could funding achieve the maximum impact? Could the funding available be used in different ways to support regeneration?

‘Rural Scotland in Focus’ highlights that many regeneration initiatives focus on towns that the Scottish Government classifies as having populations between 3,000 and 10,000. Scottish Government policy and funding support is largely focused on regeneration of town centres and their businesses. Limited attention is given in rural policy to the role of towns in the wider rural economy.

Scottish Land & Estates agrees with the view in the 2006 Audit Scotland review of Community Planning that the fragmented nature of funding arrangements to support the delivery of national policy objectives is problematic. Constant short term challenge funds with prohibitive deadlines are not conducive to sustainable development.
We feel that integrated place-based policies that bring in planning consent for business units, affordable housing and broadband investments are increasingly essential, since these are all interconnected parts of regeneration and sustainability in wider rural Scotland without these necessary components, wider community benefits and regeneration can not occur.

**Partnership Working**

**Question 4:** What delivery mechanisms, co-ordination of, and information on the funding that supports regeneration are required, to facilitate access by all sections of the community?

**Example:** LEADER

LEADER is part of the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) and is a bottom-up method of delivering support for rural development. The aim of LEADER is to increase the capacity of local rural community and business networks to build knowledge and skills, and encourage innovation and co-operation in order to tackle local development objectives.

Scottish Land & Estates would like to see dedicated Community Engagement Officers being employed to facilitate interaction between all stakeholders. Further information is provided in our response to the land reform review.

Funding should be accessible and not spread too thinly. A central system which allows for communities and applicants to filter funding options would be helpful.

As part of our land reform response, we have also recommended that the Scottish Enterprise Rural Leadership Programme be extended to include community representatives.

**Question 6:** How can it be ensured that regeneration projects are sustainable in the long term?

Projects taken forward must be viable and have buy-in from the public and private sectors as well as from the existing local community.

There is a need for greater flexibility. What is a good project now, may not necessarily address the needs of a community in the future.

Often community based projects are driven by a few enthusiastic people rather than by the community as a whole. There is a need to identify long term support for projects to ensure momentum is sustained as communities develop and to account for people moving in to and
away from an area. There may be a role to be played by the Community Engagement Officer in times of transition to ensure longevity of community based projects.

Practical Issues

**Question 7:** What actions could the Scottish Governments forthcoming community capacity building programme include to best support communities to do regeneration themselves?

We are aware of many current examples of communities working together with public and private owners of properties and land to progress community management or ownership. This should be encouraged and existing projects and tool kits should be developed to support communities to do regeneration themselves.

**Example:** Sustainable Estates for the 21st Century project,

One of the streams of the Sustainable Estates for the 21st Century project, 2007-2012 explored the potential of collaborative initiatives between privately-owned estates, communities and other partners. The research identified that ‘becoming more visible within the community often helped to challenge outdated stereotypes and promote mutual understandings of the inspirations of both estates and communities.

The research identifies a number of benefits of engagement and collaboration:

1. Reducing a perceived disconnect between private estates, communities and other partners.
2. Developing new business and asset opportunities
3. Accessing wider knowledge, skills and resources.
4. (Re-) connecting people with the land
5. Releasing volunteer energy
6. Making robust and accepted decisions

We would recommendation that funding is provided to deliver a project promoting the Working Together for Sustainable Estate Communities Toolkit, and to support estates in progressing effective community engagement.

**Question 8:** What role should CPPs play in supporting the community in regenerating their communities?

Scottish Land & Estates believes that CPP engagement in development of Local Development Plans is crucial. CPPs should be involved at an early stage in the process.

**Question 9:** How can CPPs best empower local communities to deliver regeneration? Please provide any examples of best practice or limitations experienced that you think the Committee would find useful in its scrutiny.

Scottish Land & Estates believes that Community Needs Assessments and Community Action Plans are vital components of an effective community planning process.

We also strongly believe that there is a need for CPPs to have access to advice and training.

Community engagement is at its more effective and influence when not seen in isolation, but as part of the overall process with clearly identified outcomes.

**Example:** Cairngorms National Park Community Action Planning Toolkit

The toolkit developed by the Cairngorms National Park is a model which could be replicated in other areas of Scotland, and the Park Authority must be commended for work it has carried out to improve community planning – including the Ballater One Voice Our Future Project.
Question 10: How can the outcomes of regeneration truly be captured and measured? What are the barriers to capturing outcomes and how should the success of regeneration investment be determined?

Scottish Land & Estates would welcome a strengthened duty on all partners to engage through the community planning process through an engagement framework. A duty should also be placed on the public sector to publish an easily updated community engagement plan as a means of reflecting on progress and identifying areas of improvement.

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