Written submission from Margo McLellan

I cannot comment on specific elements of the Land Reform Bill which has recently been put forward, but would like to comment in general terms on land reform which I consider to be urgently required in Scotland and needs to be radical in scope and implementation.

I was brought up on a tenant farm [REDACTED] and have watched the buildings which my father relinquished back to the Estate when he retired fall into disrepair and become not only become an eyesore but a waste of resources and a danger to my Mother who still lives at the farm and who is afraid to go out into the close on a windy day in case she is struck by falling slates. If the buildings had been maintained, they could have been converted into at least 7 houses, [REDACTED]. That farm is not the only example of this [REDACTED] but is simply one of many assets which could be sold for conversion or divided into smaller units for young people to rent or buy for homes and possibly businesses.

The economy [REDACTED] is held back by the lack of desire on the part of the two Estate owners to relinquish control of any of their land, ie for recreational use or for building plots to help the shortage of affordable housing which has left us with an ageing population and lack of working population who cannot afford to buy houses on the open market.

Instead, the land is grazed to exhaustion by deer in the name of "sport" which means that management of the deer is negligible and the number of deer is out of control. Previously, only [REDACTED] had deer enclosed by a deer fence, but now [REDACTED] has deer grazing and an upturn in the tick population. I would like to know how much these "sporting" Estates contribute to the economy of Scotland - I know the Estate which owns my father's former tenancy and many of the tenancies in [REDACTED] has its business registered in Jersey, thereby bypassing tax laws which the rest of us abide by in Scotland. Diversification in the use of land would also be encouraged if large Estates were split up, hopefully lessening the number of acres in Scotland dependant on the killing of animals for sport.

Information about all land ownership should be easily accessible by a register to anyone in Scotland.

I welcome any change to the status quo and welcome the Scottish government's introduction of this Bill. Reform is badly needed to encourage those making a living from the land that it is not an automatic right of birth to own the land, but has to be earned and business rates charged on land is a positive step to putting the ability to earn a living from working on the land on a fairer footing with other large businesses.