I welcome the opportunity to comment on the above bill and outline my views as follows:

1. It is vital that Scottish Ministers require a member of the Scottish Land Commission to have expertise or experience in land management as part of the overall skill sets of the commission. Members of the commission must have practical hands on experience to enable it to gain credibility with landowners and members of the community alike.

2. I welcome the appointment of the Tenant Farming Commissioner so long as the person appointed again has practical hands on experience.

3. Under part 5 – Right of Communities to buy land for further sustainable development there seems to be no definition of “sustainable development”. Amongst all the debate on land use it is frequently forgotten that land owners are constrained by local planning authorities in their attempts to build houses especially in more rural areas. Rural businesses need modern communications such as broadband and a comprehensive mobile phone network which is still sadly all too lacking not just in the deepest glens but even on the edge of lowland towns and villages. Ministers should be making sure that all local businesses can get connected to the new high speed broadband services currently available in some parts of the country.

4. Part 6 – Valuation Roll of Shootings and Deer Forest – I am of the view that the cost of administration is likely to far exceed the value of tax raised. It will cause considerable difficulties for assessors and the fact that it will apply whether or not the shooting or stalking rights are exercised will bring the measure into disrepute in the rural communities where they are applied. The rural areas in which most tax will be payable are the most fragile economically and to increase costs in these areas will challenge the viability of the communities and employment amongst them.

5. Part 10 – Agricultural Holdings - Modern Limited Duration Tenancies – Scottish Ministers desperately need to make the proposition of letting land attractive to landlords as Scottish agriculture needs a strong and vibrant tenanted sector. I remain to be convinced that the measures outlined will allay the fears of those wishing to let land and view the proposals to widen assignation and succession as a sign of muddled thinking. Even the Ministers Review Group highlighted the risk of widening too far. Landlords must be given incentives and encouragement to let land.