Written submission from South Ayrshire Common Weal

We welcome the proposals contained in this Bill as a significant step forward in tackling the many longstanding inequities around Scotland’s land.

Specifically we support the proposals on:

- The establishment of a Scottish Land Commission
- A statutory Land Rights and Responsibility Statement
- Communities Right to Buy powers
- Sporting Estates Rates reinstatement
- Deer Management reform
- Agricultural Holdings reform

We are concerned however about the following issues which were contained in the final report of the Land Reform Review Group in May 2014 and are missing or not acted upon within the Bill.

Land Register

No recommendation has been made about the very slow rate of progress in completing the Land Register. We see this as a crucial issue, which needs to be acted upon with a target date for completion within a few years. It is our view that the lack of completion seriously undermines the potential to achieve the government’s stated aim of radical change in ownership and related fiscal policies.

Land Taxation

There is a complete lack of consideration of any land taxes eg Land Value Tax or current exemptions or reliefs for agriculture which again could have a significant positive effect on local government taxation and the government’s equality agenda.

Private Land Ownership

We strongly agree with the proposal to prevent non EU registered bodies from registering title to Scottish land to improve accountability and to the recommendation to set an upper limit on the total amount of land that can be owned by a private individual or organisation so that Scotland can redress the current total inequity of land ownership.

Housing

We consider the omission of any discussion on the proposals for the creation of a Housing Land Corporation which could acquire land for much needed housing in rural and urban areas to be a lost opportunity and we would urge reconsideration of this issue.
In conclusion, we would contend that the Bill provides an opportunity for more rapid and fundamental change than currently being proposed and would urge the government to seriously reconsider the issues we have raised during the passage of the Bill.