My comments are in response to the Bill as a whole, rather than a specific section of the Bill.

Scotland is in a unique position politically, culturally, and historically. With the SNP landslide victory and the referendum, the people of Scotland are engaging in the democratic process more than they have in the past. But only to a certain extent; this is because they are locked out of major decisions that take place behind closed doors, and only after tokenistic ‘input’ into the process. And the process is top-down, rather than bottom-up. People are treated as if their opinion is of no consequence, that they ‘don’t know what’s for their own good,’ so the powerful, in their infinite wisdom, will go ahead and decide for them.

This Bill is a chance for the Scottish Government to change certain aspects of the current top-down system to reflect more respect for local opinions. It is a chance to divert from the status-quo tokenistic front loading that is a sad feature of the current system.

This is seen all across Scotland, as derelict lands lie fallow when they could be put to good use for the common good, rather than sitting in secret hands for some unknown purpose. But how shall we know who holds the land unless there is access to information? It is time for a change.

It is embarrassing that such a proud nation as Scotland holds on to the vestiges of feudal land practices. It is not ok for less than 500 individuals to hold so much private land for their own use when we know without a shadow of a doubt that Scotland needs land, and affordable land, but build new housing to help bolster, and replace, the existing and ageing stock.

What are the fears? That businesses will leave? That billionaires will be offended and take their money elsewhere? Let them be off then. Who wants friends whose number one priority is how much they have in their bank account, and how can you help them make more money?

Your responsibility is to the majority of people in Scotland, not just the people who are able to grease palms and provide financial and political clout. And now is as good a time as any to make drastic changes to alleviate some of the injustices seen in the way land is owned and utilized in Scotland. Now is a time where some of the wounds of the land clearances can receive a balm of equality and justice. The bucolic lands of Scotland are not just for the rich, as Tom Weir showed us by taking urban folk into the hills.

Please do the right thing for the many, not the few. The time for saying one thing and doing another has past.

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