Written submission from the Planning Advice Service (PAS)

PAS
PAS is an independent charity operating on social enterprise principles which helps people in Scotland engage with the places around them. Engagement is a key aspect of enhancing local democracy and empowering communities to ensure that Scotland is a fairer and more equal place in which to live. PAS provides impartial planning advice, training, education programmes, facilitation, mediation and community visioning (charrettes), to ensure everyone has a voice in creating positive communities.

WHY PAS IS INTERESTED IN THIS CONSULTATION
The provisions of the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill have the potential to change the way in which people in Scotland relate to the places they live in through community ownership of land, and thus to impact positively on social justice and local democracy. The provisions of Part V of the Bill will also cross-cut with the issues of community planning and service delivery, a key area of interest to PAS. Effective engagement will have to lie at the heart of the success of any community right to buy process.

COMMENTS
PAS welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation and the comments below relate primarily to Parts III, IV and V of the Bill.

Land Reform and Social Justice
PAS supports the provisions of the Bill which will make it easier for local communities, where there is a clear community desire for this to happen, to take ownership of land. PAS believes that the outcomes of the Bill, alongside the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act, have the potential to:

- impact positively on the relationship between spatial planning, regeneration and the social justice agenda in Scotland;
- act as a key factor in helping to create engaged local communities with the confidence to do things for themselves; and
- raise opportunities for communities to develop their own vision and potentially more formal community land use plans for their area.

Engagement
- Community interests with regard to land reform must be progressed based upon solid engagement-based planning and regeneration strategies, ideally developed by the local community itself, and linking with community planning and service delivery.
PAS would hope and expect that any community group pursuing right to buy would embed effective engagement into the process.

Nevertheless, PAS welcomes Section IV of the Bill (Engaging Communities in Decisions Relating to Land). PAS accepts that it is not possible to legislate for effective engagement, however it is difficult to comment further on Part IV without having at least some idea of what the guidance will contain.

PAS would be interested in commenting on draft guidance or potentially being involved in the process of developing the guidance and our practical toolkit for effective engagement (SP=EED®) is a relevant resource in this regard.

Access to Information

- Easy access to information about the opportunities arising out of the Bill will be paramount to its impact and success, including ready access to information about ownership of land.
- It may be time to radically re-think the way information about land reform and community empowerment is presented to communities throughout Scotland. A new web-based hub for communities who want to benefit from the provisions of this Bill, the Community (Empowerment) Scotland Act and want to do things for themselves - would be very useful in terms of local democracy.
- Community Councils will continue to be the only type of community group in Scotland with a statutory role with regard to local government functions, so information for and about them could be included on the above resource.

Training and Support

- As well as easy access to information, many local communities will require additional support and training in order to engage with opportunities arising from the Bill – not just to “vision” the future they want for their area, but also with regard to the relatively complex associated processes inherent particularly in Part V of the Bill.
- Dedicated resources in terms of staff – whether within national or local government or the third sector – may be required in order to allow communities to benefit from the provisions of this Bill.
- It would be beneficial to provide pro-active initial support to assist communities throughout Scotland to undertake community visioning exercises both before and after successful land transfer processes – these could also be linked to charrettes or similar processes. These are already key aspects of PAS’s work.
PAS: Background Information

PAS is an independent charity operating on social enterprise principles which helps people in Scotland to understand and engage with the places they live in through advice, training, education and awareness-raising, so that everyone has the power to create positive communities for the future.

Volunteer-led – PAS services are delivered by a combination of associates, staff and a large volunteer network of more than 400 built-environment professionals, including planners, architects, landscape architects and legal experts. Our personnel offer not only their time but share their professional skills in order to enable people to engage proactively with the planning system. Volunteering is at the heart of what we do.

Advice – PAS provides impartial planning advice and is the trusted body for anyone looking to understand the planning process and the places around them.

Training – PAS promotes education for all in the planning process to encourage community engagement in creating positive places. With over 20 years’ experience, the expertise of our staff and volunteers inspires and empowers people across Scotland.

Placemaking – PAS is a trusted organisation which inspires individuals to be aware of the planning process and their role within it, while raising civic awareness of the positive effect good placemaking can create for all.

Education and Events – PAS runs events which raise awareness about community spaces. We believe that education and participation are key to enabling our communities to engage with the built places around them, and we support that process in schools, communities and in our nation’s life.

SP=EED® - (Successful Planning equals Effective Engagement and Delivery) is PAS’s guidance on effective community engagement and is referred to in Scottish Government guidance as a benchmarking tool for community engagement.

Charretteplus® - is a PAS model which links spatial and community planning and helps communities to create a vision for their place. It is delivered through a unique network of PAS volunteers, associates and staff; and brings together partners who share and contribute to the PAS ethos of building community capacity, trust, independence and after-care.