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## By Email

Claire Baker, MSP  
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Your Ref: N/A  
Our Ref: MC-02-2023

Reply to: Edinburgh Office  
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Date: 07 February 2023

Dear Ms Baker

## REGISTERS OF SCOTLAND – EFW QUARTERLY PROGRESS UPDATE

I am writing to provide the Economy and Fair Work Committee with a quarterly update on the work of Registers of Scotland (RoS) as part of the agreed reporting. For ease of reading, I have outlined the latest updates against relevant headers below.

### Performance

Our Key Performance Indicator progress is updated quarterly on our external website and the end of December 2022 position is now available.

Our external KPIs are all on or ahead of target. Of particular note for quarter 3 is our progress in increasing our rate of clearance of older cases with 6800 despatched (against a quarterly target of 5500) and our increase in our customer satisfaction index (discussed in more detail below) to 78.3 (against a target of 78).

### Legislation

My officials have been working with SG officials on plans to extend the transitional period (in respect of the offence provisions) for the Register of Persons Holding a Controlled Interest in Land (RCI). The instrument to do so (The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 (Register of Persons Holding a Controlled Interest in Land) Amendment Regulations 2023) was laid on 23 January 2023 and is subject to the affirmative procedure.

### Transparency of Land Ownership

We continue to make good progress in delivering the benefits of a complete land register. Our estimations are that around 87% of addresses that regularly transact are now on the land register, and our total land mass coverage (taking into account unlocking Sasines and land register work in progress) is around 88%.

My officials continue to work with SG and UKG officials on the conveyancing implications of the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill, around potential changes to the operation of the Register of Overseas Entities.

## **Digital Services**

Register Land and Property (RLP), RoS' strategic channel for applications to the Land Register, is being expanded to include over 100 additional deed types for dealings over the whole of a registered title. This work is focused on ensuring that uptake of the service is maximised and is anticipated to deliver later in Q4. This further reduces customer reliance upon the Land Register application form (first introduced in 2015) and improves the customer experience in submitting applications by reducing requirements for data input. This activity is also part of the channel shift strategy to focus upon single routing into RoS.

Internally, our focus is on exploring the feasibility of significantly increasing the use of automation to support our processes, including the possibility of end-to-end automation of our highest volume work. The approach involves capturing better structured data via RLP, programmatically comparing that data to submitted deeds and automatically populating the register based on that data. There are three reasons for adopting this approach. Firstly, in the short run, it will allow us to free up people to be deployed on other registration work to reduce and clear current stocks of open casework. Secondly, and more strategically, it largely severs the current ties between RoS performance and the activity in the housing market because the service will remain consistent regardless of numbers of applications. Thirdly, it will improve quality and therefore accuracy of the register by reducing the requirement for manual transcription of data.

RoS' digital work was featured in a [recent article in Holyrood magazine](#).

## **Geovation Scotland**

In order to position Geovation Scotland and RoS as the leading support for organisations and innovators in the geospatial/property sector and to help inform what support is needed for the growth of the Scottish market, Geovation Scotland is undertaking a review of the Scottish proptech landscape between December 2022 and April 2023.

In order to capitalise on the findings of the proptech review, recruitment of cohorts 5 and 6 (previously scheduled for November 2022 and Spring 2023 respectively), will be moved back to summer 2023. In addition, rather than recruiting 4 startup companies every six months (up to 8 per annum), there will be one larger cohort of up to eight companies recruited annually. The larger cohort will offer better opportunities for peer-to-peer support, better use of coworking space and more impactful community activity at no detriment to the bespoke nature of the programme. Promotion of the open call for applications will begin Feb/March 2023, with cohort 5 beginning the programme in June 2023.

Geovation Scotland founders across the accelerator and community continue to show growth. Most recently, Grand Bequest (cohort 4) was successful in securing £250k of venture capital investment in December 2022, which increases the total amount raised by early-stage Geovation Scotland companies to just over £1.25 million.

## **People**

### CSPS and Wellbeing

We have participated in the Civil Service People Survey (CSPS) since it began in 2009, and the most recent survey concluded in November 2022. The CSPS results are not permitted to be publicly published until the Cabinet office releases the Civil Service results, at which point I will advise the Committee on the RoS results.

We have recently received the results of our “We Invest in Wellbeing” external assessment with confirmation of being awarded Gold level accreditation. The key area of focus for developing our wellbeing agenda going forward will be to foster a sense of belonging for colleagues now that we have embedded our hybrid ways of working.

### Real Living Wage

The early payment of the Real Living Wage for two RoS contracts has been agreed and this aligns RoS with the Scottish Government’s approach during the cost-of-living crisis. Furthermore, a Modern Slavery statement has been drafted and will be published at the end of this financial year.

### Industrial Action

On 18 January RoS received formal notification from PCS of strike action for one day on Wednesday 01 February. This was part of a wider National Day of Action called by PCS for all departments who met the 50% threshold during their recent ballot. In anticipation of a potential strike, activities were already in train and therefore communications to the business were swift and timely, and plans were put in place to ensure RoS was open and providing services for its customers. We remain in contact with SG officials and continue to ensure we are prepared for the possibility of further strike action should it occur.

## **Stakeholder Engagement**

The autumn customer satisfaction survey – conducted anonymously by the Institute of Customer Services, returned a customer satisfaction score for our professional users (78.3), our citizen users (91.1), and our customer effort (3.3). All of the satisfaction scores are improved, and the extensive data we get allows us to pull many valuable insights from the customer responses. The customer effort score is slightly different as the lower the score, the better the customers view the ease of using our services. As many similar government bodies and private sector organisations do the exact same survey, we are able to accurately benchmark and RoS compares favourably to other bodies. We have started a significant programme of analysis and engagement within RoS on this data and we are putting together internal and external comms around it to advise customers that we take action on what they tell us, to increase trust and encourage future participation. The survey will be run again in spring 2023.

We held a Data and Statistics User event at the end of January. Offering this online saw 99 participants joining. Government participants included the Scottish Fiscal Commission, the Office of Statistical Regulation as well as colleagues in SG Housing. The event also attracted academics and commercial users of our data including large

estate agents, search companies and online property price providers. The purpose of the event was to make customers and stakeholders aware of changes, seek input on proposals and to ensure that the widest groups are aware of the data we hold and make available to ensure it provides real value and insight across the public and private sector.

A specific engagement activity with the President and Chief Executive of the Law Society of Scotland took place this month to hear feedback about RoS, gleaned during their Presidential tour. During these discussions we have reiterated the action we have in hand to mitigate the impact of long-standing open-casework and our overall strategy to resolve the issue. Work to develop the next phase of customer communications in relation to this issue continues.

In terms of parliamentary interactions, we issued the December edition of our quarterly parliamentary newsletter at the end of 2022. We are also continuing to monitor the progression of the Moveable Transactions Bill which is now at Stage 2.

We ended 2022 with a Parliamentary breakfast briefing at which we took members through the different resources available when dealing with constituency queries - this was attended by 21 members.

We have now confirmed details for an information drop-in session for MSPs and their staff on Wednesday 19 April 2023, from 1800-2000hrs in the Parliament Fleming Room (CR3). The interactive session, featuring demonstrations of our key services and functions, will provide MSPs with the opportunity to be updated on RoS work and have an opportunity to discuss any questions or concerns. As you will be aware you have kindly agreed to sponsor the event and invites are due to be issued to members w/c 06 March.

## **Finances**

Our current financial projections are that we will continue to be broadly self-financing in this financial year and future years, with income from fees matching the cost to serve customers at around £90 million. We are monitoring housing market activity as the economy more generally slows, although we remained close to our mid-range scenario through Q3.

## **Estate**

We continue to explore options to share space in our buildings and are in advanced talks with another public sector organisation. In early January we welcomed Social Security Scotland to Meadowbank House, who have taken up residence in one of our wings.

## **Other Matters**

RoS is actively contributing to meeting the expectations of the public sector reform agenda. As noted above, we are already sharing our estate. In addition, we are an active participant in work that is investigating options for more effective delivery of shared services across different public sector organisations.

In November we entered Registers of Scotland into the Smarter Working Lives Awards. We are pleased to note that we have been shortlisted in the “Create a great place to work” category for our efforts in redeveloping Meadowbank House and our progress in developing hybrid working practices. Winners are due to be announced on 23 March.

We are in the process of updating our current Corporate Plan 2022-27, with detail on the delivery planned for 2023-24 in March.

We have recently initiated the triennial review of our Framework Document which is due for publication on 01 June 2023. To improve Scottish Government’s relationships with public bodies, the Ryan Review proposed certain recommendations, one of which was to regulate the use of templates. In response to this, SG Public Bodies Unit has created a number of model framework agreements and we are using the Non-Ministerial Office template as the basis for our review. We will adopt the model insofar as possible, allowing for diversification to account for our specific requirements, and it is expected we will complete the review by the end of March.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require anything further in relation to the information provided in this update, or if there are other aspects of RoS work that you would like to receive further updates on.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Henderson', written in a cursive style.

**JENNIFER HENDERSON**  
**Keeper of the Registers of Scotland**