22 November 2017

Dear Graeme,

Thank you for your letter of 2 November, in which you ask for some further details of progress being made on land reform.

Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement – Promotion

Section 3 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 requires that Scottish Ministers must, in exercising their functions and so far as reasonably practicable, promote the principles set out in the Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement (‘the Statement’).

I was delighted to launch the Statement - the World’s first - on 28 September at the first annual conference of the Scottish Land Commission. This was well attended by a wide range of interests, including community groups, private land owners, NGOs and academics, many of whom attended two workshops on the application of the Statement.

A programme of work to promote the principles in the Statement is already under way, both within the Scottish Government and with public bodies and stakeholders.

Within the Scottish Government, a programme of discussions is ongoing to raise awareness of the Statement and engage with a number of key policy areas (such as Planning & Architecture, Marine Scotland, Housing and Social Justice, Regeneration, Agriculture & Rural Economy, and Local Government & Communities) who contributed to the development of the Statement. For example, guidance to local authorities on common good land, which is currently being prepared, will include a requirement to consider the Statement.

We are also working to ensure that our public bodies are aware of the Statement and we will be writing to Local Authorities to encourage them to take the Statement into consideration when making decisions about land.

We worked closely with a number of stakeholders when preparing the Statement and we will continue to engage with them. These include Scottish Land and Estates, the National Farmers Union Scotland and Community Land Scotland.
The Statement is on the Scottish Government website and articles about it have been published in industry journals, including in the Scottish Planning & Environmental Law magazine and the Scottish Tenant Farming Association magazine.

As you will be aware, the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 requires the Scottish Land Commission to have regard to the Statement, and the Commission may issue advice on the Statement and play a role in making its practical application clear. Officials met the Commission recently to discuss the way in which they will take the Statement into account in their work.

**Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 - Part 9 Access Rights**

Part 9 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 was commenced on 31 December 2016. It makes minor amendments and procedural clarifications to Part 1 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, on the review of core paths plans and the service of court applications relating to access rights.

We will be consulting in due course on revised guidance for Local Authorities and National Park Authorities on the changes introduced under Part 9 and taking account of some lessons learned on the operation of Part 1 of the 2003 Act since it came into force in 2005.

**Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 – Revised Crofting Right to Buy**

As set out in my letter of 31 October, we have been prioritising other regulations under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 and the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, and no decision has yet been taken on the timetable for laying regulations on the revised crofting right to buy. I will inform the Committee when a decision is taken.

Yours,

Roseanna Cunningham