

SCOTLAND'S LAND: THE AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE

Following the 2018 Peter Wilson lecture sponsored by the Scottish Centres for Rural Research and the Royal Society of Edinburgh by Roger Crofts Scotland's Land: failures and successes, challenges and opportunities, he sets out below the agenda for Scotland's land for the future.

"Your lecture was informative, thought-provoking and inspiring" Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, President RSE.

What needs to be done

1. Supporting 'stewards of the land'

- Roll out the Land Rights & Responsibilities Principles to all owners, managers and tenants
- No public money for those who do not subscribe to the Principles & Codes of Practice
- Cut the bureaucracy with new single contract system with outcomes that make natural and business common sense
- Agree that the land serves a multiplicity of purposes and avoid outmoded single use syndrome
- Redistribute the CAP monies to deliver public goods & services including food over all land
- Make sure that enforcement is proportionate and practical to the owner and tenant.

2. Getting out of silos and reducing land use conflict

- Establish the Land Use Strategy as the overarching mechanism for integrated land use
- Establish & fund Regional Land Use Partnerships to develop locally relevant spatial strategies under the Land Use Strategy programme
- Stimulate regional strategies for renewable energy installations and forestry as one element of Regional Land Use Strategies
- Radically revise the Forestry (Scotland) Bill to bring into the 21st century as one of several competing land uses and increase enforceable controls on planting and harvesting methods, and species types
- Use behavioural sciences experts and techniques to reduce conflict between interests.

3. Priority to protection of Prime Quality Agricultural Land

- Reinstate full protection for Prime Quality Agricultural Land as major element of Scotland's natural capital
- Fundamentally revise Scottish Planning Policy 2016 paragraph 80 to give primacy to protection of Prime Quality Agricultural land from built development
- New housing land through greater use of degraded and vacant land and demolition of properties which are social disasters.

4. Greater recognition and better protection for Scotland's best scenery and landscapes

- National Scenic Areas have weak protection under Section 263A(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended & Wildness Areas unprotected
- Fundamentally review National Scenic Area & landscape protection mechanisms to fit with 21st century knowledge and societal values
- Enact new legislation to protect finest scenery, landscapes and wildness areas.

5. Establish Environmental Improvement Areas

- Identify areas of environmental degradation – soil erosion, diffuse pollution etc, and focus resources on their improvement as Environmental Improvement Areas, especially intensively farmed areas of eastern Scotland.

6. Safeguarding Scotland's natural diversity

- Retain the Natural 2000 system post Brexit
- Establish independent enforcement regimes for transposed EU environmental Directives and Regulations
- Fund internationally important areas: UNESCO Biosphere Reserves and Geoparks as models of sustainable development
- Drastic reduction in deer numbers to enable habitat recovery through radical statutory measures with effective implementation and enforcement, and market measures to increase human consumption of venison.

7. Planning for climate change

- Prepare and implement whole landscape networks and corridors programme to connect nature protected areas and aid species movement to react to climate change
- Strict control on new uses and stewardship of carbon rich soils and peats.

8. Land Literacy education

- SQA to introduce land literacy as essential part of secondary geography curriculum
- Geography to be formally recognised by Scottish Government as the key component of sustainable development education and made compulsory secondary 1 to secondary 5
- Outdoor learning as key element of land literacy and sustainable development to be in timetable for all schools S1 to S5
- Education Cabinet Secretary to encourage rural/urban schools' twinning's to achieve greater understanding of importance of the land and the rural environment to urban dwellers
- JHI and SRUC to increase use of research and demonstration farms science for disseminating material to the public on land literacy
- SFC to pump prime multidisciplinary and multi-university land literacy research and dissemination centre to complement the roles of JHI and SRUC
- SFC to fund dissemination of research on land and the environment through learned societies such as the Royal Scottish Geographical Society.

9. Species reintroductions

- Dissemination of scientific data on species reintroductions to overcome biased propaganda
- Systematic objective assessments using international protocols under The Scottish Code for Conservation Translocations for lynx only.

Key Messages

- ✓ Recognise past realities and mistakes to work for a better future
- ✓ 'One size fits all' uniform approach for the whole of Scotland defies 'natural common sense' given the natural diversity of the country
- ✓ Cannot turn the clock back to some idyllic past. Let's learn from the past and use our current knowledge to test new futures
- ✓ It's how the land is looked after now and in the future that counts more than who owns it
- ✓ We are not clever enough to 'future proof' so let's 'plan with the future in mind'
- ✓ Reward all owners, tenants and managers for good stewardship of the land
- ✓ Public money for public goods
- ✓ Silos of decision making are alive and well and its time they were demolished
- ✓ Integrated approaches to resolve ongoing conflicts in land use essential
- ✓ Let's get away from the 'not invented here' and 'blame somebody else' thinking to more collaborative thinking and action
- ✓ Commitment to move from comfort zone to new neutral middle ground is only way forward out of land use conflict

Listen to the lecture

<https://youtu.be/fbq4EbOT55E>

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