**Scottish Government’s Review of the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement**

**Response from Scottish Quakers Parliamentary Engagement Working Group, January 2022**

**Proposed revised vision:** A Scotland with a strong and dynamic relationship between its land and people, where all land contributes to a modern and successful country and supports a just transition to net zero and where rights and responsibilities in relation to land and natural capital are fully recognised and fulfilled

1. **Do you think that the revised vision reflects the outcomes that we need to achieve?**

To some Extent

1. **If you have answered ‘no’ or ‘to some extent’, what key changes would you like to see to the vision?**

While the recognition of the land in contributing to a just transition to net zero is to be welcomed, we do not feel that this revised vision reflects the fundamental reframing of our relationship with the natural world that is required to respond to the climate and ecological crisis.

As Quakers our understanding is that “We do not own the World and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will” (Advices & Queries 42). We believe the vision should be sufficiently broadened to recognise that the natural resources of Scotland are sacred, have intrinsic value and are finite. The vision should also commit to protecting these vital natural resources, from one generation to the next, acknowledging that this requires significant cultural change. The vision goes some way towards this approach by acknowledging a dynamic relationship between Scotland’s land and its people, but it could go further still by recognising the responsibilities we all have to repair, support and enable healthy ecosystems that in turn support and sustain life on earth for future generations. Each generation should protect and enhance the health of the land, for the next. Such a reframing is vital in shaping how we understand and therefore interact with the natural world, moving us away from an extractive model to a vision where we recognise that, rather than masters, we are but part of the natural world, with a role to play. Such a reframing is not unprecedented, being widely recognised by traditional communities across the world, while parallels from another modern democratic state can be found in New Zealand where the Whanganui River was granted legal personhood, with associated rights in 2017.

1. **Do you think that the principles are still relevant to current Scottish land issues? (Yes / No)**

1. The overall framework of land rights, responsibilities and public policies should promote, fulfil and respect relevant human rights in relation to land, contribute to public interest and wellbeing, and balance public and private interests. The framework should support sustainable economic development, protect and enhance the environment, help achieve social justice and build a fairer society. **Yes**

2. There should be a more diverse pattern of land ownership and tenure, with more opportunities for citizens to own, lease and have access to land. **Yes**

3. More local communities should have the opportunity to own, lease or use buildings and land which can contribute to their community’s wellbeing and future development. **Yes**

4. The holders of land rights should exercise these rights in ways that take account of their responsibilities to meet high standards of land ownership, management and use. Acting as the stewards of Scotland’s land resource for future generations they contribute to sustainable growth and a modern, successful country. **Yes**

5. There should be improved transparency of information about the ownership, use and management of land, and this should be publicly available, clear and contain relevant detail. **Yes**

6. There should be greater collaboration and community engagement in decisions about land. **Yes**

1. **If you think that the principles could be made more relevant, or that there are any issues that they do not address, please outline this.**

Principles 1 & 4

At present these principles only recognise humans as the principal users, beneficiaries and rights holders in relation to land. We believe that this perspective has contributed to the climate and ecological emergency that we currently face. We believe that these principles should go further by recognising the responsibilities people have to support and enable healthy ecosystems that in turn support and sustain life on earth.

1. **Do you have any proposals as to how to measure change as a result of implementation of the Statement, including suggestions for indicators of progress?**

We believe that there would be merit in using the engagement and state indicators outlined in [Scotland’s biodiversity strategy](https://www.nature.scot/information-hub/indicators-trends/scotlands-indicators), as well as considering metrics such as diversity of land ownership, levels of community use / ownership etc.

1. **Do you think that there is a need for regular reporting on implementation of the Principles of the Statement?**

Yes

1. **If you think that there is a need for regular reporting, how do you think this should be done and by whom?**

We would see significant benefit in having a clear picture of who owns Scotland’s land, how it is being used, and what health it is in. We could see this picture being achieved through regular reports on the state of land ownership, use, and biodiversity within Scotland, which could be coordinated by the Scottish Land Commission on behalf of the Scottish government.

1. **If you would like to submit a case study, please provide details of a specific example. You may submit more than one case study.**

N/A

1. **Are there any changes that should be made to the Advisory Notes to make them more clear, relevant or reflective of current context? If your comment relates to a specific principle please flag which one.**
2. **Do you have any comments on the layout of the Statement?**

N/A

1. **Please tell us about any sectors you perceive to have lower awareness of the Statement.**
2. **Do you have any suggestions of ways to engage with sectors who do not currently see the Statement as relevant to them?**
3. **Do you have any ideas for other ways that adoption of the Statement could be promoted?**

Giving it a statutory basis