

COP26 Scottish Land Commission urges transformation of land ownership

This article has been provided by The Scottish Land Commission as part of our series of articles published during COP26, the UN conference on climate change which is being held in Glasgow from 31 October to 12 November 2021.

The Edinburgh Reporter posed a simple question to several individuals and organisations in the city: What are you doing to address climate change?

With all the world looking at Glasgow during COP26, and in the face of climate emergency, it is clear that the time to do something about climate change, no matter how small, is now.

What are you doing about climate change?

Land is at the heart of Scotland's action on climate change and this is driving the work of the Scottish Land Commission. For Scotland to achieve its ambitious climate targets, there will be a land use transformation over the next decade.

"In making this change, communities need to feel not just engaged in the decisions, but feel the benefits of it in their

own places and communities,” says Emma Cooper, the Commission’s Head of Land Rights and Responsibilities. “As well as acting at scale and quickly, this transformation must be done in a socially just and responsible way which reduces inequalities rather than exacerbates them.

“The Land Commission provides guidance on how this can be done, using the Scottish Government’s [Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement \(LRRS\)](#) to ensure responsible approaches are at the heart of land ownership and use.

“The significant changes we need to make to our land use bring risks and opportunities. We all need to benefit from the opportunities. Reaching our climate change targets is an opportunity to build a fairer, greener Scotland with empowered communities leading the way. To do this we need to rethink our land ownership and management systems and practices.”

For example, new value is being created in land by carbon and nature values. The Land Commission is working to understand what this means for the land market and our pattern of land ownership. It is also addressing the question of who benefits, and how carbon and natural capital values are shared fairly and usefully so this value is retained in the Scottish economy. The emerging and rapidly-growing influence of carbon value in the land market is being driven by socially responsible investment – including, for example, companies and organisations acquiring either land or carbon credits to offset carbon emissions and support their climate change objectives.

Climate action on land is not just about rural communities, though. The Land Commission has led collaboration to transform the way Scotland re-uses vacant and derelict sites in the heart of our towns and cities. There are many inspiring examples now of sites being brought back into use in ways that help deliver climate action, creating greenspace, nature networks, renewable energy generation or active travel use.

Many of these are led by communities, demonstrating the benefits for climate, economy and quality of place that can be delivered through community-led regeneration.

The Commission has agreed a five-year Climate Change Action Plan to significantly reduce emissions and embed sustainable targets and actions within its own organisation and supply chain, and is committed to supporting Scottish Government in achieving its climate change targets. As an organisation the Commission has seen the benefit of reducing carbon emissions and improving staff wellbeing by reduced commuting and increased working from home as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and is consulting with staff to retain the benefits of this going forward in new ways of working.