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**SUBMISSION TO SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT  
ON LAND REFORM(SCOTLAND) BILL**

- 1) We welcome the opportunity to give written evidence to the RACCE committee, and do so from our own perspective., dealing only with those parts of the Bill which have a direct impact on us. For subjects not covered in this submission, please note our support of the views expressed by the Scottish Land and Estates.
- 2) Stracathro Estates is a land based company operating in North Angus, farming inhand 2,500 acres, with six tenant farmers, 25 residential tenants, renewables from solar and wind, commercial lettings, commercial shooting and salmon fishing, horse lettings and a game farm.
- 3) Our philosophy with regards land ownership is to recognize the rights of others to the land we own. We may have the legal right of possession, but that does not give sole rights. Others have the right to live on the land, to walk on the land, to enjoy the land, to look at the land, to smell and to hear. No major management decision is made without considering the interests of those who would be affected by that decision.
- 4) We are members of SLE, NFUS, LEAF, and accredited members of Scottish Quality Crops and Wildlife Estates Scotland (WES).
- 5) We are very open with our work, and have been honoured by visits from two members (one past) of your committee. We believe in transparency and co-operation.

## LAND GOVERNANCE (part 1& 2)

- 1) We welcome the concept of a LRRS, but question the timing. Surely it should be drawn up during the discussions of the Bill?
- 2) Again we welcome the creation of a Scottish land Commission., but would suggest there must be greater land use experience on it.

## TRANSPARENCY OF OWNERSHIP (Part 3)

We welcome any moves to increase the transparency of land ownership, and those who control land. As a company, we make public both the names of our directors, and the shareholding of each director.

## ENGAGING COMMUNITIES. (part 4)

We would welcome guidance as to how engagement with local communities can be improved. We are concerned though that it becomes prescriptive, and this might jeopardize existing good relations. For instance, before applying for planning permission for large turbine, we canvassed the views of all twenty-six houses within two kilometers of the proposed site. We received twenty four letters of support, and no letters of dissent.

## RIGHT TO BUY TO FURTHER DEVELOPMENT (Part 5)

Whilst in principle we should have no problem with the concept, we are concerned with the description of sustainable development. Take for instance, wind farms. These are contentious. We avoided criticism for our development because we ensured those affected were on-side. Had we encountered significant opposition we would not have proceeded. Yet under these proposed provisions those who did not object would be allowed to buy the land, if they could show they represent the community. In effect, our concern for local opinion could be manipulated into a compulsory community purchase.

## VALUATION ROLL FOR SHOOTINGS/ DEER FORESTS (part 6)

We are nervous of this proposal as there is little evidence that it has been thought through. The present exemption was introduced because as a tax it was not cost effective. (The dog licence was abolished in 1987 for the same reason). There is no reason to assume that it would be any more cost effective now. Small shoots will close (especially on low ground), and the fragility of profits in grouse shooting is shown in this poor breeding season. Deer forests are often criticized for not killing enough, yet this proposal will only penalise those who run their assets well. To suggest that the revenue earned will pay for community buy-outs shows a lack of reality.

## AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS (Part 10)

We all accept that the present legislation is a nightmare, being prescriptive and unworkable. We need to avoid tinkering, and come up with a solution, which will reflect the modern world.

Both the extremes of the debate have been correctly dismissed; those extremes being the cancellations of tenancies and the absolute right to buy by tenants.

What is being proposed is not going to achieve the overhaul we need.

Landowners must be encouraged to let more land, and tenants must be able to retire as they would in any other profession.

We have to work together to achieve proper levels of rents, but in return all realize that the tenant must be recognized for his stewardship on retirement. At present that value is passed on to the successor. That value should be recognized by the landlord, and there should be a mechanism to compensate all outgoing tenants, whether with legal succession or not. The tenant would forego that payment if he decides to exercise his rights to pass on his farm.

The MLDT will be to many too bureaucratic and will do nothing to increase land available for tenancies.

The widening of assignation and succession is wrong and flawed. It flies in the face of good business practice, and is proposed simply to protect the tenancy value.

We do welcome the principle of conversion of existing 1991 tenancies to a termed tenancy, but without detail it is difficult to give full support.

