

Kevin Stewart MSP
Convener, Local Government and Regeneration
Committee
Rob Gibson MSP
Convener, Rural Affairs, Climate Change and
Environment Committee

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21 August 2014

Dear Kevin and Rob

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill – Part 4 Community Right to Buy

Thank you for the constructive exploratory discussion to look at the merits of having the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee lead on consideration of the community right to buy elements of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill on which the Local Government and Regeneration Committee has been formally designated as the lead committee.

The First Minister made a clear commitment at the Community Land Scotland Conference on Skye in 2013 to include community right to buy in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill because of the natural synergies between the community empowerment agenda and community right to buy legislation. At that stage changes to the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003: Part 3 Crofting Community Right to Buy was not considered, largely because all available resources were focused on improving the Community Right to Buy and developing provisions for neglected or abandoned land. However, as the pace of land reform in Scotland is increasing the Government is now keen to improve the crofting community right to buy legislation in line with the amendments to Part 2 of the 2003 Act and intend to take this forward in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill. There is also sense in addressing all parts where communities are able to exercise a right to buy, addressed in the same bill to ensure consistency between the various parts.

We recognise that this would increase the workload quite significantly on the Local Government and Regeneration Committee for what is already a challenging bill and timetable and would take that specific aspect of the Bill further away from the core remit of the committee. For those reasons we discussed and agreed that while the Local Government and Regeneration Committee was still best placed to lead on the overall Bill, there would be merit in the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee taking the lead on consideration of the community right to buy provisions of Part 4 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1 and reporting its findings to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee. We also thought there would be merit in having any relevant amendments on community right to buy referred to the Rural Affairs, Climate

Change and Environment Committee at Stage 2. I am happy to confirm that is the Scottish Government's preferred way forward.

Officials are ready to engage with the clerks to discuss the practical implications and can provide briefing and further information as required.

Yours for Scotland
Joe

JOE FITZPATRICK

Copy to: Presiding Officer