

Initial meeting on scope: DL and Keith McWhinnie: 21 August 2026

Invite email:

As you may be aware through our ongoing work regarding Scotlands 4th Land Use Strategy it is our desire to support and further develop the understanding that land is a holistic and interactive system where actions in one area have consequences in others. We want to see an integrated land-based system that understands the competing priorities placed on land, one that looks for synergies and points of common interest, and one that is enabling and supportive of land managers in their choices as we move through our just transition.

Since their appointment we have been in discussions with the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs over the establishment of a new multi-interest advisory group that can provide a platform for holistic, strategic cross-sector discussions on land and land use. One that will help the Ministers, Stakeholders, and the SG as we collectively seek to better understand:

the system wide interactions, tensions and benefits between sectoral policies, actions, and associated delivery plans; and

- the opportunities to align actions within land, agriculture and nature with the broader economic growth and wellbeing ambitions of Scotland.

This group will be chaired by the Cabinet Secretary with a relatively small number of key stakeholder organisations invited to be part of it. I would be very grateful if you have a bit of time over the next week or so to have a quick chat about Link's interest and the possibility of you becoming a member.

Meeting note:

Aim: to discuss Land use as a system - not just agric but also nature, forestry, crofting. No hierarchy on which is more important but looking to explore how land can be managed in contested space.

Group remit covers all strategies - LUS, SBS, CCP: this group operates above sector level discussions, including PDG and will explore how each sector contributes to the delivery of strategies, looking at tensions and solutions.

Ambition: bringing voices into room to look at targets, trade offs synergies, benefits, building on outputs from sector groups including PDG and forestry equivalent.

Cab Sec wants: she is emphasising the Team Scotland approach to our shared ambitions and shared targets to achieve and wanting to nail how we can deliver on

those shared issues. This Group is where the crunchy conversations about trade offs will happen: eg agri proposals from PDG and forestry will come into this group for discussion and solutions.

JT: will be a theme and a potential delivery vehicle to discuss. SG team looking at embedding JT across land and ag, favouring a systems approach, looking at the wider system and what works and what doesn't.

Balance of members: see ToR: Crofting, LINK, SLE, WWF, NFUS, confor, SAS, RSPB, NFFN, WTS, tenant farmers, young farmers: no PBs but represented by Director ENFOR who will be in attendance. No upland management or energy input proposed. DL sent Keith link to Common ground Forum for info.

LINK rep and role: we discussed the LINK approach to provide capacity for members to feed into process via LINK reps: agreed. DL or DP will be official LINK reps but seat will be available to others where their expertise is needed / where dates do not suit.

Practicalities: 3 meetings a year: 2 hours: in person. First meeting = 1 Oct at SAH then move around. Looking for reps of orgs not individuals, to make for better approach to challenging conversations.

Structure: key issues from participants will be sought beforehand for agendas: with papers as conversation starters. Transparency is a key guiding principle and SG team is sensitive to concerns around rail roading or co option. Outputs will include meeting records with nuanced records of groups discussions. This is proposed to ensure all views are incorporated even if reps can't make individual meetings. In those cases, there will be further exploration via correspondence.

Transparency: We ran through the behind the scenes process at LINK and which we will use for this group: Keith is keen to have access to full member network expertise. Papers will be issued in advance with full transparency so we will be able to have pre meets and rep briefings as usual so all interested members can contribute their views and have them shared at the meeting.

Outputs: Advice to ministers: Group outputs will be advice to Cab sec, for her to use at Cabinet etc and for SG team to use within SG, but will come via the group first.

How long for? No set life span. I suggested a review mid term to assess progress because targets will have been blown / delivered by end of Parli term.

Next steps: formal invite next week from cab sec next week with draft ToR. SG team aiming to have conversations on ToR individually via correspondence or teams if needed to save time in first meeting fro substantive discussions on issues rather than process.