Land-Based Social Enterprise

What is standing in the way of new models of common good land use?
A lot of people have shared their time and expertise to help us put together our policy programme and this report. Thanks to everyone who spoke to us in person, by phone, or by contributing at the event. This report could not have been written without you, and we hope that others will be as generous as we take this work forward. We also hope that by collecting and presenting this information, we will encourage more people to look into the sector, and these issues, and expand on the work we have started.

At Shared Assets we believe that our woodlands, waterways, green spaces and coastal areas are common goods that can be productively and sustainably managed in ways that create shared environmental, social, and economic benefits. Social enterprise provides a business model that is well placed to deliver against this triple bottom line. It enables communities to come together to manage land in ways that work for everyone, delivering a better environment, improving health and wellbeing, and contributing to the development of a sustainable local economy by creating jobs, livelihoods and renewable resources.
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Executive Summary

At Shared Assets we believe that land is a common resource and that it should be made to work for everyone. This means using land to generate social, environmental, and economic value. Mainstream models of land management often fail to deliver social and environmental value, whilst many also require subsidies to be profitable. We need new models of land management, and we believe land-based social enterprises can deliver them.

Land-based social enterprises are organisations that use land to create social and environmental value, whilst also generating income through trade or delivering services. They can help address some of the main problems with land use in the UK, by delivering high quality, sustainable models of socially and environmentally productive land management, even in a time of austerity. However, there are a number of immediate and more structural issues standing in their way. This report identifies eight immediate issues and discusses how they might be addressed, before exploring how building an agenda for land reform could help tackle some of the more structural issues in the longer term.

Immediate issues facing land-based social enterprises

- **Difficulties developing financially sustainable models**: It is difficult to generate an income through land management, and the market can be especially inhospitable to social enterprise land use, not least because it largely fails to account for social and environmental value. Government should use its powers of regulation, tax and subsidy to encourage models that create social and economic value.

- **Lack of access to good land data**: Social enterprises need quality land data to make good decisions, however it is often unavailable. Whilst more and more land data is being produced and released, little attention is given to how it can be used to promote the common good. Providing transparent and accessible land data should be a priority for government and other data holders.

- **Struggles with commissioning and procurement**: Government could be a market maker for land-based social enterprise, using its buying power to help the sector deliver social and environmental value from public land. However, commissioning practices often disadvantages land-based social enterprises. The Social Value Act should be strengthened, and innovative commissioning for social value needs to be encouraged and developed throughout government.

- **Struggles with the planning system**: Planning policy is supposed to promote sustainable development but land-based social enterprises often see the planning system as more hindrance than help. Planning policy needs to evolve and adapt in order to support new models of sustainable land management, and authorities need to explore how to facilitate rather than hinder community land use.

- **Problems with coordination, support and advocacy**: Land-based social enterprises would benefit from better coordination and cooperation within the sector. Support for the sector needs to be peer led, and support organisations need to work together towards shared goals.

- **The high cost of land**: Speculation and perverse subsidies contribute to high land values, a key barrier to land-based social enterprises. Government should reform subsidies and the tax system in ways that incentivise common good land use, and give communities a bigger stake in the land around them.

- **Difficulty securing leases and agreements for land sharing**: Land sharing offers one solution to the high cost of buying land, however finding willing landowners and setting up supportive agreements can be problematic. Large landowners should be encouraged to work with land-based social enterprises to deliver shared benefits and create wider social value from the management of their land.

- **Skills deficits**: Making land work requires many skills, the lack of any one of which can block progress. More funding is required to provide training for land-based social enterprises and to support landowners to make better strategic decisions about the management of their land.

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2 For more information on, and examples of, land-based social enterprises go to [www.makinglandwork.co.uk](http://www.makinglandwork.co.uk).
Developing a land reform agenda:

There are some barriers to land-based social enterprises, and other common good land uses, that can only be addressed through more fundamental changes. To overcome these barriers, interested stakeholders will need to work together to identify and campaign on shared interests. This will mean developing a wide range of connections and asking some fundamental questions about what land should be used for.

Key strategies to facilitate new models of common good land use

Legislators: Legislation should reflect the need for land to be used to achieve social, environmental, and economic value. This means refocusing subsidies and taxation, introducing a form of land value capture, making it easier for communities to access land to deliver shared benefits, and correcting the market’s failure to account for social and economic value.

Government (local and central): A culture of innovation is needed throughout government to deliver shared value from public land, and to ensure that innovative approaches are supported rather than frustrated. This must also be supported with adequate resources.

Large landowners: Resources must be dedicated to facilitating innovative and strategic land use for the common good. Processes should be put in place that make it easier for land-based social enterprises to engage with land owners and collaborate to deliver shared benefits.

Practitioners: Land-based social entrepreneurs need to understand the needs of, and build better relationships with, key stakeholders including landowners, commissioners, planning authorities.

Support organisations: Organisations providing support to land-based social enterprises need to be responsive to the needs of practitioners, providing tailored support in business development, networking and governance. More collaboration is needed, especially around advocating for new models of land use.

Funders: Funders need to understand the needs and potential of land-based social enterprises and to direct funding accordingly. They also need to understand where an expectation of a financial return on investment is realistic, and where the aim should instead be to promote social and environmental value.

Shared Assets: We will work with all the above groups, and others with an interest in developing new models of land use for the common good, to encourage and support them to take action to remove the barriers facing land-based social enterprise. This will include:

- Identifying and filling knowledge gaps, and ensuring practitioners and other stakeholders have good access to the information they need.
- Demonstrating and evidencing the potential of the sector, and highlighting new models of land use.
- Developing relationships between land-based social entrepreneurs and other key stakeholders.
- Exploring the diversity of land-based social enterprises and understanding what this means for their development.
- Supporting the development of a more organised sector, with a bigger voice.

If you have an interest in any of the areas discussed in this report please sign up to our newsletter or get in touch: hello@sharedassets.org.uk
1 Introduction

We believe that land should be used for the ‘common good’, that is, to generate social, economic, and environmental value. Social enterprises are developing and implementing new models that show this can be achieved, even in a time of austerity. We know these organisations and understand these models better than anyone, and we want to help them achieve their potential. This report explores the issues that are holding these new models back. It sets out what needs to change, what we are doing, and what we think other stakeholders should do, to make this happen.

1.1 Land use in the UK rarely delivers social, economic and environmental value

If land is to work for everyone, it needs to deliver social, economic, and environmental value. The way we currently use, and think about, land means that this is rarely the case in the UK due to:

Low productivity: Natural assets that cannot easily be exploited for profit are often under-managed. Even where the management of land is profitable, this does not mean it is delivering social or environmental value. In some cases, the subsidies and tax breaks available to landowners encourage investment in land that is unrelated to its productive potential. An absurd situation exists, whereby land management is heavily subsidised by the public, yet delivers little in the way of the common good.

A broken relationship between people and the land: Land ownership is highly concentrated and lacks transparency. People often do not know who owns the land around them, so communities are disconnected from their local natural assets, feeling little sense of ownership or control over them. Public knowledge about land ownership and the social, economic and environmental impacts of land use (their ‘land literacy’) is very low. Public debates about land use rarely get past the housing crisis, so opportunities to develop more strategic approaches to promoting other common good land uses are rare.

A lack of sustainable alternatives: Drastic cuts to the budgets of local authorities and other public land-managers have made it difficult to sustain even existing management activities. Traditional sources of income for third sector land management, such as grants, are increasingly hard to come by. Some public land is considered little more than a liability, however there is strong public opposition to privatising public land and community assets. Stale and conflicting narratives commonly describe land as either something to be protected (conservation narrative) or as a resource to be exploited (industrial farming / housing development narrative). These factors all impede the development of innovative new approaches.

1.2 Land-based social enterprise provides new models that can help change this

New models of managing land for the common good are needed, and we believe land-based social enterprises can deliver them. ‘Land-based’ means the organisations use land, or environmental assets, to carry out their core activities. This could be anything from forestry in remote parts of the UK to projects using urban waterways. ‘Social enterprise’ means they are set up to generate income, but also have a primary social and/or environmental purpose into which any profit is reinvested rather than being distributed to owners or shareholders. These models help achieve common good land use by focusing on a triple bottom line, delivering social, environmental and economic value. Moreover, by aiming to be financially sustainable and independent, they may be well placed to deliver high quality land-management in a time of public austerity.

This is not to say that social enterprise is always the best model or that other models of land management are not important. Developing a sustainable livelihood from land is not easy, and a degree of public subsidy
will likely remain necessary in some cases. Equally it is important that not all land is managed with the aim or expectation of generating an income. However, it is an approach with popular and political support that offers innovative ways to find new potential in under-managed land. It helps move beyond the dichotomies of public or private land ownership, and land being used only for conservation or exploitation. It can also engage communities with the land around them. Thus we see it as key way to move towards common good land use, and as such have made it the focus of this policy programme.

1.3 We understand the potential of land-based social enterprises better than anyone

Shared Assets supports the relationships needed to make land work for everyone. We work with a wide range of organisations: from local authorities and other landowners wanting to use their land more creatively, to social and community enterprises working with, or seeking access to, land. We are the only UK organisation focused on supporting these new models and the relationships needed to support them.

In the 3 years since we were established we have provided support to more than 40 land-based social enterprises, offered consultancy and training to a range of landowners and public sector bodies, and conducted research on woodland social enterprises, local authority woodland management, and community production of renewable energy. We have also explored the potential of models of social and community enterprise food growing, waterways management, and green space management, and we are currently working on projects looking at rethinking park management, developing community woodland projects, and the community management and ownership of natural assets.

We have found that many of the organisations we work with share issues and challenges that are rooted in their relationship with land. Whilst other policy work has looked at some of these groups and models, it is fragmented across a number of different sub sectors such as forestry, food growing, or parks, with little joining up of issues common to all land-based organisations. We think that by focusing on the common issues shared by all these groups we will be able respond in ways that benefit a wide range of land–based organisations, whilst also contributing to the development of a new paradigm of land use for the common good.

1.4 We want to identify and address the issues standing in the way of this potential

This policy programme was designed to explore the issues that stand in the way of land-based social enterprises delivering models of common good land use. Some of these issues are relatively immediate in the sense that we think steps can be taken to address them now. Other issues are more structural - these will require fundamental shifts in how we use, and even understand, land in the UK.

By bringing together a diverse range of land-based practitioners, landowners, and support organisations we can find common ground from which to identify and tackle barriers to common good land use. We want to build mutual understanding and develop shared policy positions based on practical experience, and underwritten by evidence. Success in addressing these issues will depend on our ability to engage with others to take joint action to improve the way we use land. We are keen to collaborate wherever possible, on research, campaigns, and any other means of taking this work forward. We also don’t want to replicate work, so please get in touch if you know of any on-going or completed projects investigating these issues.

We’re grateful for the support of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for making this work possible and excited to have this opportunity to explore how to support the development of land-based social enterprise sector. This report highlights the sector as it exists now and the main issues it is facing. It also provides us with a list of objectives, and a baseline against which to evaluate any changes.
1.5 Infographic: New social enterprise models of land use^2

Another version of this infographic, with links to interesting case studies and reports, can be accessed here: http://www.easel.ly/browserEasel/2545730
2. Immediate issues facing land-based social enterprises

The issues discussed in this chapter were identified over three years working with land-based social enterprises and landowners, as well as more recent discussions with a variety of experts while developing this policy work. We tested and discussed these priorities at our ‘Making Land Work’ event in June 2015. Over 60 practitioners, funders, policy makers and sector experts at the event confirmed the importance of each of the issues discussed in this report and provided a wealth of new information.

We also invited representatives of land-based social enterprises to fill out an online survey about the issues they face. Due to the relatively small number of respondents the findings should not be considered representative of the sector as a whole. They do however provide a useful indicator that the issues outlined here are indeed important to these organisations, and in demonstrating where further attention may be beneficial.

Debates surrounding social enterprise, land management, and land reform are too numerous for us to be able to address every issue. We have prioritised those that are particularly relevant for social enterprises that work with land, and where we feel Shared Assets can help.

The immediate focus for these issues is on solutions that don’t rely on major legislative changes. This is not because we think comprehensive land reform is not desirable. Rather, it’s because our immediate priority is what can be achieved now, within the current political and legislative framework. We recognise the importance of building a movement to consider fundamental structural issues about land use in the UK and are actively exploring how we best support that work, as we discuss in Chapter 3. However, we also believe that a number of small changes can help grow the sector in the short and medium term, whilst laying groundwork for larger changes in the long term.

The remainder of this chapter introduces eight of the key issues facing land-based social enterprises today. For each issue, we discuss its key facets and steps that particular stakeholders can take to address it. We also identify strategies we want to pursue ourselves, or with others. Each of these issues can be approached individually, however there are also many common ties between them. They can also be mutually exacerbating, particularly where they lead to a loss of momentum that can create further issues.

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3 You can find videos from the event at our Making Land Work microsite
4 See Appendix for survey methodology
2.1 Difficulties developing financially sustainable models

Developing a sustainable income from social enterprise land-management is often a struggle. Indeed it came out as a big issue for most of the respondents to our survey.

Figure 1: Issue: Difficulty building sustainable business models

![Image]

There are well-established land-based social enterprises operating across a range of sectors. However, it is important not to create unrealistic expectations about generating large incomes from land management, especially when organisations are delivering other valuable social or environmental outcomes. For the sector to thrive we must understand which business models are likely to work best in which situations, and to celebrate and help to scale success stories.

Key issues and current context

Social and environmental value is not recognised in the market: Land-based social enterprises often deliver value that is undervalued by the market. Improving natural capital such as biodiversity or air quality is incredibly valuable, but generally not adequately compensated. The same is true for social capital, for example improving health and wellbeing, and building community cohesion. The government has already made some attempts to address this, for example establishing biodiversity offsetting, payments for ecosystem services, and the Social Value Act. However, in general these outcomes remain largely undervalued.

Markets are often dominated by large producers and suppliers: Many land-based social enterprises produce products such as food, timber, or fuel. Huge buyers such as supermarkets, who are able to force very low prices, dominate markets for these products. This makes it difficult for land-based social enterprises to sell their products at a price that reflects the costs of production and make their businesses sustainable.

It is hard to generate income from land management: The business models of many large land-based businesses such as farming and forestry still rely on significant subsidies. It is unrealistic to expect social and community enterprises to entirely remove the need for public subsidy of land management.

The models being employed are still relatively new: While there are already well established projects operating successfully, the sector needs time to develop, identify and scale successful models. A significant number of the organisations that responded to our survey felt they had designed a new model that could be adopted elsewhere (see Appendix Table 1).

Calls to action

Government and public agencies should:

- **Value social and environmental outcomes**: Existing legislation such as the Social Value Act should be strengthened and extended. Mechanisms for recognising the creation of environmental value, such as payment for ecosystem services, should be developed further.
Refocus tax and subsidies on promoting common good land use: A tax and subsidy system that encourages environmentally destructive land management and delivers little in the way of social value is clearly in need of reform. The tax system should promote new models, for example by making a wider range of common good land uses eligible for social investment tax relief.

Support organisations should:

Provide more business-focused support: Of the organisations that responded to our survey there was high demand for support in developing commercial trading income, accessing loans and social finance, and developing new markets. Only a relatively small proportion had received support for each so far (see Appendix Tables 2, 3, and 4).

Develop, spread, and scale new models.

Landowners and funders should:

Have realistic expectations about what can be achieved. In some cases it may be reasonable to expect that social enterprise management will reduce costs, however it may not always be possible for social enterprises to fund all their work through income generation, at least until other actions such as those outlined above are taken.

Nurture new projects: Even where social enterprises adopt models that will allow them to be financially self-sufficient in the long term, they may need support early on. This could include start-up funding, help accessing training, or freedom to use the land for a range of commercial activities.

We will

Improve evidence of what works: We will continue exploring factors that contribute to the success of land-based social enterprises. For example, two key strategies for sustainability are diversification and cost reduction. Other novel funding sources such as green prescriptions also have potential. We will draw together learning from these innovative models, as well as identify failures, and share this information with the sector.

Structure expectations about the sector: Land-based social enterprises can improve land use and save money in the long term but are not a silver bullet. Our survey suggests that grant funding is likely to play a long-term role in many organisations (see Appendix Figure 5). Furthermore, not all social and environmental missions can be achieved through the medium of business and social enterprise. A key part of our role is being able to advise practitioners and landowners where these models are, or are not, likely to be appropriate.

Explore innovative financing solutions: We will identify and publicise opportunities for social enterprises to access funding for land management. We will also identify areas where funders and foundations should focus their support in order to grow the land-based social enterprise sector and overcome failures in market and state provision. We also want to develop new models and partnerships, for example by proposing new models like Land and Savings Trusts, and working with social financiers, like Big Society Capital, who have an interest in supporting the creation of social, economic and environmental value from new forms of land management.

We have just launched Better Land-Based Economies, a new project exploring the role of cost reduction in facilitating local economic resilience, funded by the Friends Provident Foundation.
2.2 Lack of access to good land data

Social enterprises need information about land they want to work on. Who owns it? What environmental characteristics does it have? What constraints and opportunities might come with it? At the moment, such information is often missing or inaccessible.

Figure 2: Issue: access to information on land (locating suitable land, uncovering ownership, establishing costs or risks)

An increasing amount of land data is being produced and released, and a range of valuable new applications are being found for it. However, whilst the potential economic value of such data is well recognised there is inadequate attention being given to how it can facilitate improved social and environmental outcomes.

Key issues and current context

Despite progress, some data is still unavailable or behind a prohibitive paywall: This is particularly an issue for information on land ownership. The Land Registry, which collects ownership information, has joined the Open Data Institute and opened some of its data. However, users must still pay for ownership information, and records are still incomplete (particularly in Scotland). Moreover, information on ownership of land options is generally unavailable. There have been some recent improvements. Defra will release 8000 data sets in the next year including information from the Environment Agency, Natural England, and the Rural Payments Agency. The Ordnance Survey is also making more of its data open access.

A lot more data is inaccessible in practice: Even where data is available and free-to-access, it is often inaccessible to small organisations due to the time and expertise needed to access and analyse it. Most land-based social entrepreneurs are not data scientists, nor do they have the time to identify and explore the many different datasets that could be relevant to them. Large data owners and developers have made some positive steps towards increasing the accessibility of land data. Defra has been clear that it wants to work with external experts and data users to get its data released. The OS’s Geovation Hub will support start-ups making use of spatial data. Other innovative organisations increasing access to land data include OpenStreetMap, Land Insight, Doorda, Shoothill, Emapsite, TransforMap, and Geo Geo. However, we are concerned that the needs of land-based social enterprises will be overlooked as new tools are developed.

There is inequality in access to land data: Large, well-resourced organisations have the time and capacity to access good land data. This makes it hard for small socially focused organisations without similar capabilities to compete in things like identifying available land. The release of public open

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6 For a more comprehensive discussion of what data is likely to be available, see Owen Boswarva, ‘Open Defra: what is it, and what do we know so far?’
data is therefore often little more than a subsidy for larger organisations in the private sector, since in practice they are often the only ones able to access it.

**Poor public 'land literacy':** Lack of public interest in how land is used can be partially attributed to lack of knowledge and information about land ownership and land use. Concentration of ownership became one of the main issues driving the land reform debate in Scotland. Enabling communities to find out more about the land around them could empower them to become more engaged with how it is used.

**Calls to action**

**Government and public agencies should:**

- **Collect and release more data:** Better land data makes it easier to use the land for the common good. In particular, law should require a comprehensive and transparent land register of ownership, and options.
- **Actively promote common good uses in data release strategies:** Rather than just opening up datasets, government should consider how the way in which it is released will help people and the environment. This might mean opening up data to everyone but also ensuring they invest the resources needed make it accessible to smaller socially focused groups. For more profitable datasets, another option would be offering a ‘not for profit use license’.

**We will**

**Explore what data land-based social enterprises need, and how to get it to them** We think that the market is unlikely to meet the needs of land-based social enterprises that lack the technical expertise to work with the raw data, or the buying power to commission the development of a suitable platform. We will explore what data would be most useful to these organisations. We will support improved access to this data, by campaigning for data holders to facilitate this access, and by working to develop new accessible online platforms for the data.

**Look into ways of improving land data:** since some data is still unavailable, and other potential data is not even collected, it is worth looking at ways to generate it. We want to explore the potential of approaches such as crowdsourcing to generate helpful land data. Local data is particularly interesting, with practitioners having a potential role in generating valuable information.

**Campaign for better and more transparent land data:** The fight to get more land data released is already going strong. In Scotland, Andy Wightman has led the charge for better information on land ownership, with his Who Owns Scotland database and #OurLand campaign. The RTPI is also campaigning for transparency around land ownership and options. We will support these campaigns and look for any other opportunities to drive this agenda forward.

**Promote the role of land data in improving 'land literacy':** We will explore how increased access to land data might develop land literacy by enabling the public to find out more about current trends in land use. A recent Private Eye project highlighting land owned by offshore companies provides a brilliant example of this.
2.3 Struggles with commissioning and procurement

Despite a clear political push to commission for social value, many land-based social enterprises find that public sector commissioning still excludes them in practice. Local authorities, public agencies and central government departments own large amounts of land, and commission many land-based services, so they are crucial to the development of social enterprise land management.

**Figure 3: Issue: Problems with local authority procurement of land management contracts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>9 34.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite important</td>
<td>7 26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>10 38.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key issues and current context**

**Social value plays a limited role in commissioning:** The 2012 Social Value Act was designed to encourage central and local government to include social value in their commissioning strategies. However, a review in early 2015 identified a lack of awareness of the Act and generally low incorporation of social value in commissioning.

**Commissioning can exclude new models of socially-focused land use:** Commissioning can be rigid and siloed, with contracts based on basic management of a number of sites, rather than on developing places and engaging communities. This makes contracts unattractive to social enterprises, which often want to use land to meet combinations of broader social outcomes. There can also be a lack of understanding about what social enterprises offer - our research on supporting land-based social enterprises found that they often struggle to be taken seriously by key stakeholders such as local authorities.

**Lack of resources is a barrier to innovative commissioning:** Good commissioning requires skilled commissioners with sufficient resources. In departments and authorities that are experiencing large cuts, staff often lack the time and resources to develop new models and nurture new organisations. Even where there is a desire to support small or local organisations to produce social value, they often lack the resources to do so.

**Procurement can be restrictive:** A number of common procurement practices make it hard for land-based social enterprises to compete to win contracts. Pre-qualification requirements, payment by results, and bundling services into large complex contracts all serve in practice to exclude smaller socially-focused organisations. Even the use of complex jargon can be a barrier to social enterprises competing for contracts.

**Calls to action**

Government should:

- **Strengthen and broaden the Social Value Act:** Another review is planned for the Act, but at the moment its influence appears to be quite limited. Strengthening and raising awareness about

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7 See also John Tizard’s blog on procuring to social enterprises and other small organisations
this Act are important steps to maximising the potential contribution of social enterprise to public land management.

**Local government (and other commissioners) should:**

- **Promote a culture of innovative commissioning:** Even before the Social Value Act, commissioners had the power to include social value in decision-making. Legislation is not the only solution, and direction must come from strategic leads and elected members.
- **Retain staff** with the skills to take a strategic overview of land use and commission land-based services well.
- **Implement better procurement practices** by taking steps to avoid excluding social enterprises and community organisations from taking part, for example by removing payment by results.
- **Develop social value strategies and social enterprise contract management schemes** that set out how to incorporate social value and work with social enterprises. This can help push past barriers rooted in unfamiliarity, or aversion to perceived risks.
- **Develop innovative models such as joint commissioning** to bring in more funding for land management. For example green prescriptions might involve health services contributing to the management costs of environmental assets that they send their patients to use.

**Practitioners should:**

- **Build relationships with commissioners and learn how to show that projects meet their strategic aims.** This was a key theme from our [Making Land Work video interviews](#) with successful practitioners.

**We will**

Explore how commissioning can support land-based social enterprise: It is important to identify, develop, and publicise new models of commissioning that benefit land-based social enterprises. We want to support local authorities and other landowners to work with social enterprises to produce social and environmental value, whilst [making land management more financially sustainable](#).

Improve mutual understanding between the public sector and land-based social enterprise: We want to study successful relationships in order to establish how these can be developed elsewhere. Mutual understanding can create space for new solutions. Landowners need to understand how social enterprises can help them. Social enterprises need to show how their projects will help landowners to achieve their aims. A local authority may not have an objective around increasing local food production, but local food projects can also meet a range of other objectives, such as for jobs, training and improved health and wellbeing.

**Explore the changing role of local government:** In the face of drastic cuts, local government is changing across the country, with different authorities taking adapting in different ways. It is important to understand these different emerging approaches, and what works for each in terms of producing desirable social and environmental outcomes through land use.⁸

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⁸ See also, the New Local Government Network paper on ['The Council and the Common'](#)
2.4 Struggles with the planning system

Planning policy should promote sustainable development and help local government and communities realise their vision for their area. Actively supporting social enterprise land management to deliver social and economic value and empower communities could be a key part of this. However in reality the planning system is often seen as more hindrance than help. The planning system has a key role in protecting the character of land, including restricting social enterprises where necessary, but new models of land use will require new thinking.

Figure 4: Issue: Planning policy/ restrictions or land use classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>53.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite important</td>
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<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key issues and current context

Land use classes can restrict innovation: Planning policy groups land into ‘use classes’ that determine what it may be used for by its occupants. The current set of use classes shows little understanding of the ways in which social enterprises use land to produce environmental and social value. To deliver social value whilst remaining financially sustainable, land-based social enterprises have developed innovative new models of land management, for which planning permission can be hard to gain. One example is the need for permission to build new infrastructure to support diversification away from traditional land management (for which the original use class was determined). This could be building a classroom for school visits. Or, it might be 'living on the land' - a key way of reducing costs and one that is very difficult to get permission for in most cases.  

Lack of expertise on the planning system, and corresponding inequalities: At least to start out with, land-based social entrepreneurs are rarely experts in negotiating the planning system. In some cases, perceived barriers may simply be due to a lack of knowledge about planning policy and processes. Lack of expertise can also lead to difficulties competing with private sector organisations with expert staff and large dedicated resources.

Issues with cultures in planning authorities: Land-based social enterprises report finding planning processes inaccessible and lacking in transparency. This means that engaging with planning authorities can be alienating and frustrating.

Lack of strategic approach to socially and environmentally positive land use: Broad strategic oversight over how land is used in a particular area is rare. Local and neighbourhood planning processes provide an excellent way to take a strategic, but locally focused, look at land use as a whole within an area. These processes could help land-based social enterprises access land to produce social and environmental value, however few plans currently consider broader strategic land-use beyond housing.

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9 In our survey, the ability to build structures and the ability to live on the land were both described as being important by many of the respondents. (See Appendix Figure 6)
Calls to action

Government should:

- **Strengthen and refocus planning**: Planning processes need to be able to a strategic look at how land use can encourage environmental sustainability while also meeting people’s needs. Planning authorities can only achieve this if they are given a stronger mandate to do so, and the resources needed to follow it through.\(^{10}\)

- **Reform land use classes and designations**: New classes could support a diverse range of activities in addition to traditional land management, for example making it easier for social enterprises to build new infrastructure and sustainable onsite accommodation.

- **Facilitate the allocation of more land for community management**, for example by strengthening the ‘community rights’ legislation in the Localism Act, or introducing new land use classes that permit development to deliver improved social and environmental outcomes.

Planning authorities should

- **Communicate consistently** with communities and social enterprises, when they engage with the development process. They must ensure that policy and procedures are transparent and accessible.

We will

Work to improve mutual understanding between planning authorities and land-based social enterprises: There is sometimes debate as to whether planning policy needs to change, whether better guidance is needed for the authorities applying it, or whether critics of it simply need to understand how to use it better. Whichever is true in each situation, land-based social enterprises and planning authorities would both benefit from being better prepared to work with each other.

Explore how planning policy and processes can support land-based social enterprises: More research needs to be done on the issues land-based social enterprises face with planning policy, in order to create an evidence base from which to campaign for change. However, we also hope to identify key learning for land-based social entrepreneurs on how to use existing policy better. They need to understand how planning authorities work – for example who to talk to, when to do it, and what kind of information they will need to provide.\(^{11}\)

Explore how to make community and social-enterprise land-management a bigger part of local planning: Just as land needs to be found for affordable housing, local areas could help deliver public benefits by setting aside land for activities such as community food growing or renewable energy production in the plan making process. We want to look at the experience of neighbourhood planning to date to find examples of good practice, and to think about how other local areas can use these opportunities to take a strategic look at land use for the common good.

Campaign to refocus the planning system on making land work for everyone: We will support the TCPA campaign Planning4People, and work others on similar campaigns to help make this a reality.

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\(^{10}\) See also, the Town and Country Planning Association’s campaign on #Planning4People, which lays out a number of policy suggestions for government that would help achieve this.

\(^{11}\) Some guidance is already available, for example from Planning Aid.
2.5 Problems with coordination, support, and advocacy

Support organisations have a key role to play in strengthening and building the capacity of land-based social enterprises. They provide access to things that practitioners often find it difficult to obtain, such as information, markets, and advocacy. However, accessing, maintaining, and coordinating support can be challenging.

Figure 5: Issue: Networking (e.g. need for interaction or collaboration with other organisations)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Quite important</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key issues and current context

Good practitioners are rarely network administrators! Practitioners are often keen that support should be peer led but rarely have the capacity, resources, or indeed an interest in the administrative responsibilities needed to set up and run peer-led support organisations.

Difficulties sustaining networks and support organisations: While the internet has made it easier than ever to talk to and bring together practitioners, sustaining networks and support organisations can be a challenge. As they grow, dedicated, paid staff may be needed and the network itself will need to develop a sustainable business plan.

Internal conflicts: Whilst they may be set up based on common beliefs about how to work together, in the long term, conflicts around values, ideals, goals, representation, governance, funding and alliances can derail attempts at collaboration.

They can be unproductive: if they are not clearly benefiting practitioners, groups on the ground can perceive support organisations as a waste of energy and resources. Bad experiences with badly designed or delivered support can put practitioners off engaging with other organisations in the future.

Lack of joining up between organisations: There are some great support organisations and networks operating that provide support to land-based organisations12 however they are often focussed on providing support to specific sub sectors such as community food growing or renewable energy production, and lack the resources and structures to collaborate outside these silos on cross cutting issues common to all land-based projects and organisations.

Calls to action

Organisations supporting land-based practitioners should:

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Focus on good governance: Internal conflicts can be extremely damaging to networks, and may often be avoidable if better governance structures are in place and members are clear about their shared aims, objectives and values and where these may differ. Understanding the best ways of organising, governing, and managing networks is crucial to their success.

More practitioner involvement: In order to retain the relevance and momentum of a network practitioners should be actively involved in setting strategy and identifying support needs. Even in more established groups, engaging practitioners can bring new energy, and focus.

Better linking with other networks and organisations around common interests and sharing resources: Through our policy programme, we are increasingly learning, and trying to demonstrate, that different land-based sub-sectors face many similar issues. Working together, these groups could identify, and campaign on, shared policy goals.

Funders should:

Support collaboration between organisations: They can do this by funding collaborative projects rather than funding similar activities in different land-based organisations and sub-sectors.

We will

Bring together existing organisations: We will continue to bring together a wide range of organisations to work for their mutual benefit. We also want to bring in stakeholders beyond those already directly supporting the sector. Participants in our research on ‘Supporting Land-Based Social Enterprise’ described Shared Assets as occupying a valuable position between the worlds of grassroots projects, policy, business and estates management. We will seek to maximise the value of this position to ensure the development of land-based social enterprise in the UK.

Raise awareness of issues relating to land ownership and management: Some organisations are not focused on the land-based sector per se, or even perhaps on practitioners, however they may still share some common interests in relation to land. We will work with organisations focusing on issues such as affordable housing, the planning system, and social finance where we think that turning even a portion of their attention towards new models of land use could reap major benefits.

Ensure access to effective support for land-based social enterprises:

Publicise the support needs of land-based social enterprises: 'Supporting Land-Based Social Enterprise' identified key support needs including governance, networking, skills and capacity, developing relationships, and engaging communities. We will continue exploring the common needs of these organisations and share that information with those who can help.

Promote good governance: this is already something we put at the heart of our trainings and support and we have also developed a decision-making toolkit to help developing organisations.

Explore sustainable models for long-term support provision: There are several models for generating income for support organisations, for example membership fees, selling products, consultancy, and engaging in commercial partnerships. We are interested in collecting and conducting more research on how to sustain effective support for land-based social enterprise.

Explore how to develop effective, peer-led support: In our recent research on support for land-based social enterprises and our other work, practitioners have expressed the desire for peer-led support that maintains good relationships with important stakeholders, is transparent, independent, evidence based, practitioner led, and which has a clear narrative and mission.
2.6 The high cost of land

The high, and rapidly rising, cost of both urban and rural land is a large and growing barrier to land-based social enterprise. In England, the average value of some farming land recently rose above £10,000 per acre for the first time, after trebling in less than a decade. High rents are also an issue, especially given the difficulties of making profits from sustainable land-management. As can be seen in the survey finding below, this is not an issue for all organisations - many are likely to be fulfilling contracts on land owned by others, and have no prospect, or aspirations, of owning land. However it is very important for those who do, and especially those whose projects require long-term investment.

Figure 6: Issue: The cost of buying land

<table>
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<td>Not important</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key issues and current context:

High competition for land: As discussed earlier, social enterprises can struggle to compete in a market that does not fully recognise the value they produce; however they are not just competing for markets, clients or customers. Competition for access to land may be an even more fundamental problem. Simply accessing land is the biggest problem for many aspiring land-based social entrepreneurs. Not only do social enterprises have direct competition from the private sector, but the price of land is also being driven above its productive use value by speculation, blind bidding, and institutional investors. The problem is not just that this increases the cost of land, but also that it prevents land being used productively.

Perverse subsidies and taxation: Subsidies and taxation on land use are not well directed at producing social and environmental value and contribute to the rising cost of land. Instruments such as inheritance tax relief on agricultural land and subsidies provided through the Common Agricultural Policy mean that there is a serious financial incentive to own land even where there are no plans to use it productively or to create social or environmental value.

Disincentives to invest in land that is not owned: Some projects need infrastructure investment to create long-term returns, or are managed to deliver long term rather than short terms returns, for example forestry. These investments are unlikely to be made if the social enterprise does not have a long-term stake in the land.

Calls to action

Government should:

- Reform land subsidies and taxation: There are many ways in which this could be done, from limiting the maximum amount per recipient of CAP, to enabling smaller growers to access subsidies, or eliminating inheritance tax relief.

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13 See also, Peter Hetherington’s recent book, Whose Land is Our Land
Introduce a means of capturing land value: One example would be to take steps to enable the capture of windfall gains made by landowners near new public infrastructure. A more radical approach might be to introduce a form of Land Value Tax. At the very least, a public debate is needed on the issue of unearned wealth that accrues to landowners simply for owning property.

Allow communities to purchase land where they can improve its management. One option proposed in the new Scottish Land Reform Act is to give communities the right to purchase land where the owner is blocking sustainable development. The application of similar measures in the rest of the UK should be considered.

We will

Explore alternative ways of accessing land: Given that the cost of land is unlikely to fall dramatically without major societal or legislative changes, it is important to consider ways in which land-based social enterprises can get access to land in a context of high market values. Some examples include:

- Public asset transfer, where local or central government can elect to transfer ownership of, or rent, their land to community groups at lower than market value.
- Models of land value capture, like Community Land Trusts, allow increases in land value to be used for community benefit such as investing in improving public spaces.
- Innovative models of land tenure like land sharing and meanwhile leases hold a lot of potential. We want to explore and promote these and other novel approaches wherever possible.

Develop policy and support for a movement to make more fundamental changes to the land market: The focus in this chapter has been on short and medium term strategies, however as discussed in Chapter 3, we are also interested in exploring and promoting structural changes to facilitate new models of land use.
2.7 Difficulty securing leases and agreements for land sharing

For many social enterprises land sharing (through leases or management agreements, rather than outright ownership) is the best or only option for accessing land. There are a number of other benefits to land sharing, not least moving away from a concept of ownership premised on exclusivity, to one based on sharing rights and responsibilities. This may have particular relevance for public land, as land sharing can allow social enterprises to make the land more productive whilst retaining public ownership.

An appropriate lease or management agreement can help social enterprises to deliver their social mission by removing the hurdle of purchasing land and the burden of taking on the associated liabilities. For landowners, good agreements can help make their relationship with the enterprise stable and sustainable. A good agreement will depend on the specific needs of both parties, with some common considerations such as length, rent and restrictions. The process of establishing this agreement is also important, both to understand the land that is being taken on, and to build a relationship with the landowner.

Figure 7: Issue: Securing leases and agreements with landowners

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key issues and current context

**Difficulty finding land**: There are innovative ways of connecting landowners and social entrepreneurs, such as Landshare.net, however many organisations still struggle to find willing owners or appropriate land.

**Social enterprises may lack expertise and other resources needed to set up agreements**: Lack of expertise and other resources can be a barrier to setting up robust and fair agreements between landowners and social enterprises. Long legal documents can be daunting and both sides are often unfamiliar with the appropriate form and content the agreement should have. The journey between deciding to access land and setting up an agreement may be demanding. Legal advice is often required yet few new social enterprises can afford to access it privately.

**Difficulties for landowners**: Many landowners do not have the knowledge or procedures in place to enable social enterprises to access their land even if they would like to. This is true even for large, well-resourced landowning organisations. Sometimes departments within the landowning organisation block agreements because they don’t fit well with existing procedures and policies. This can make it difficult to secure unusual or novel forms of agreement.

**Restrictions on leases**: In some cases landowners may require restrictions on commercial activity in order to lease land at a reduced or nominal rate. This can be a problem for organisations that need to trade to support their social and environmental work.

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14 See also Shared Assets’ [video case studies on land sharing](#).
**Access to finance**: Access to finance is a key issue for most projects, and is often directly linked to their attempts to secure access to land. Both public and private landowners often require social enterprises to demonstrate they have the funding needed to set up a viable business, yet social enterprises will struggle to access funding without a lease of sufficient duration to be viable. Thus one cannot be secured without the other and projects caught in this ‘Catch-22’ situation can be delayed or even prevented from accessing the land entirely.

**Calls for action**

Large landowners should:

- **Put in place social enterprise land management agreements**: Bringing social enterprises in to manage underproductive land should be the norm rather than something unusual or novel. Large landowners need processes in place to make it easy to reach agreements with social enterprises or other third parties. A great example of this is The Crown Estate’s [Local Management Agreements](#), which set out the conditions socially focused projects must meet if they wish to gain access to their coastal property.

- **Encourage use of land options**: Willing landowners who are worried about the financial feasibility of the activity should offer options to use land on the condition that funding is secured. This should make it easier for land-based social enterprises to secure finance.

- **Be understanding of the business needs of the tenants**: Landowners should be prepared to offer long leases, and show flexibility regarding the activities the social enterprise can use the land for.

Funders should:

- **Fund more guidance and access to support on land sharing**: Several organisations, and in particular the [Community Land Advisory Service](#), are already providing support and guidance in this area, however securing continued funding for these services is a problem. Our survey showed strong demand for more support in this area (see Appendix Figures 7 and 8).

**We will**

**Develop effective models of land sharing and agreements**: We will work to identify examples of good relationships between landowners and social enterprises and see what learning we can take from them, in order to, for example, identify models, of land sharing that can easily be adopted by new land-based social enterprises and smaller landowners.**

**Promote land sharing and land-based social enterprise**: Our recent research on supporting land-based social enterprises found that new organisations have a lot of difficulty convincing landowners that their models are credible. A key goal for Shared Assets is to support and prove the viability of both land sharing and land-based social enterprise models. We’d like to work with large landowners, such as the NHS, the [Church of England](#), the Ministry of Defence and others, to support them in developing approaches to land sharing that are sustainable and deliver mutual benefits.

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15 See also, Tom Curtis and David Riddle, [The Land Partnerships Handbook](#).
2.8 Skills deficits

Making land work requires a wide range of skills, the lack of any one of which can hamper progress. This applies to social entrepreneurs without land management experience, experienced land managers who need to develop new business models and landowning organisations that need support to develop new approaches to managing their estate.

**Key issues and current context**

**Lack of land management skills:** The amount of people with land-management skills is declining in the UK. The average age of farmers is now 58, and the land-based sector as a whole has an ageing workforce. Employers in land-based organisations report that 42% of vacancies are due to skill shortages, compared to a 23% average in the economy as a whole. Lack of skills was found to be a key barrier to the success of community food projects in a report by Sustain. Our research with the National Trust on community energy schemes also found lack of access to specialist expertise to be a major barrier.

**Difficulty accessing training in land-management:** Small organisations in particular struggle as they lack the economies of scale to make regular training more affordable. Other means of training new land-based social entrepreneurs, such as through apprenticeships, can also be onerous for small organisations to set up. The majority of organisations who responded to our survey wanted more support in this (see Appendix Figure 9).

**Many additional skills are needed to run a social enterprise:** Social entrepreneurs also need to be able to run sustainable businesses. The skills below are amongst those that may be relevant depending on the type and stage of the project.

- **Business and financial management:** Basic business skills and financial management skills are crucial. Knowledge of legal and planning systems will be needed for many projects.

- **Governance:** Especially given the often consensus- and community-based nature of many land-based social enterprises, they must know how to ensure accountability and community representation and to manage conflict and avoid over-reliance on key individuals. Most of the respondents to our survey wanted more support on governance (see Appendix Figure 10).

- **Team management:** Involving the right people in a project can be a great way to tackle skills deficits; however this can be a difficult skill in itself.

- **Community engagement:** This is crucial to both business and social outcomes and many organisations who responded to our survey desired support here (see Appendix Figure 11).

- **Volunteer management:** Volunteers need support and to be provided with a meaningful experience in which they feel supported and empowered and, where possible provided with opportunities for growth and development. Poor volunteer management can be harmful to the volunteer and the organisation itself. Volunteer fatigue was a widespread issue amongst organisations that responded to our survey (See Appendix Figure 12).

**Skills deficits amongst landowners:** Large tracts of land are left undermanaged by landowners who lack the resources or opportunity to put it to more productive use. In some cases this may be because their traditional mandate is on service provision rather than land management. Others have lack the resources or capacity or appetite for risk to consider commissioning services in new ways.
Calls to action

Funders should:

- Ensure land-based social enterprises are well resourced and able to access to training and support. They should consider encouraging or even requiring skills development as a condition of funding and providing support to organisations seeking to address skills shortages in the land-based sector.

Landowners should:

- Retain the internal capacity needed to manage their land well: Even if they end up delivering little in the way of land management themselves, they still need to have internal capacity that means they can commission and oversee productive management of land and assets that deliver shared social, economic and environmental benefits.

Support organisations should:

- Provide access to training and skills development: While funding is an issue for organisations wishing to provide training, where it is available support should be focused where it is most needed. Our research on ‘Supporting Land-Based Social Enterprises’ highlighted some key areas.

We will

Explore innovative means of filling skills deficits: We’ve already come across some interesting ideas, especially at our recent #MakingLandWork event. These include; ‘people sharing’ whereby organisations pool their skills and help each other, signposting to pro bono support and sharing contacts through networks, mentoring of social enterprises by more established companies and working with volunteer coordination centres. All of these are great ideas we’d like to explore more and find out what is most effective within resource constraints. There also several approaches to onsite learning that warrant further attention:

- Since apprenticeship schemes are often too complex for one small organisation to take on, creating ‘networked apprenticeships’ that can be shared between several enterprises may be a solution. Establishing where traditional apprenticeships can be most effective, and providing examples of where land-based social enterprises have developed successful apprenticeship schemes would also be of value.

- Volunteering can both deliver a resource for social enterprises and act as a means of spreading practical knowledge about land-management. While we believe that being able to derive a livelihood is the best way to make people’s involvement in land-management sustainable, we are also interested in the best ways to recruit, manage, and upskill volunteers. At the moment, struggles with managing volunteers and with volunteer fatigue are some of the biggest issues land-based social enterprises report to us (see Appendix Figure 12).

- Land sharing can also be an important way of spreading skills, as the landowner and tenant can exchange knowledge for mutual benefit. This City and Guilds report discusses how land-based skills can be developed through community food growing and urban agriculture projects. We want to build on this knowledge and experience to identify the best ways to spread skills.

Work with landowners to support them to develop innovative commissioning and land sharing arrangements: Our consultancy work is often focused on helping landowners meet their strategic objectives through bringing in land-based social enterprises.
3. Structural issues affecting land-based social enterprises, and land reform

While the issues faced by land-based social enterprises within the current policy context are important, wider structural or legal reforms may also be needed in order to make land work for the common good. We think that the time for a serious debate about such reforms has come. The progression of the Scottish Land Reform Bill is stimulating a wider debate about UK land reform in the media. At our Making Land Work event, the sector’s appetite for ‘big asks’ in land reform was clear. In response to this increasing momentum, we want to work with others to develop and test a shared agenda for land reform. The first step is exploring some of the key questions that need to be considered for building a land reform movement in the rest of the UK.

Why is land reform important?
Traditionally we have operated in a political and economic system where assets, goods and services are owned, managed, produced or delivered either by the market or the state. In practice the public sector often subsidises land that is ‘unproductive’ whilst the private sector creates profits from land that is productive. Meanwhile, private landowners also benefit from the extra value created by public investment, for example in transport infrastructure. Social enterprises are now developing innovative models that show a new paradigm of land use is possible. We have organisations taking ‘unproductive’ land and making it productive, producing social, economic and environmental values that had not previously been considered. Even where land-based social enterprises work with traditionally ‘productive’ land, they have shown how it can be managed for the common good rather than just for profit, extending the range of value that it can produce.

Moreover, the public face many of the same issues as land-based social enterprises. These include: the rising cost of land (which is contributing to the crisis in affordable housing), a lack of accessible information about land, and the feeling that the average person has no control about how the land around them is used. Exploring and critiquing our current approach to land use is thus not just a way of supporting social enterprise, but also an opportunity to increase the ‘land literacy’ of society as a whole. We want to help enable and empower a more informed public debate about land issues and how they impact on everyday life.

Are there problems that can’t be solved without major reforms?
Chapter 2 raised a range of relatively immediate strategies for facilitating new models of common good land use. Some issues however, arguably require more fundamental reforms:
- Long-term environmental damage from the market consistently undervaluing natural assets
- The cost of land continually rising above inflation and above its productive use value
- Highly concentrated land ownership and the inability of large amounts of people and groups to access the land around them
- Increasing absentee, and overseas, ownership, which may result in the land being used less productively
- Wider problems, such as the crisis in affordable housing, may also require major reforms

16 See for example, George Monbiot and Andy Wightman in the Guardian, and William Astor in the Spectator.
What support is there for land reform?

In England there is a marked lack of public and political debate about land issues, with the notable exceptions of issues related to housing, an emerging movement of local food growing organisations, and a small but well developed Land Value Tax lobby. By contrast in Scotland a long running campaign on land rights has successfully brought these issues onto the political agenda, resulting in new rights and funding to enable communities to buy land, and a proposal by the current Scottish Parliament to bring forward new land reform legislation.

We need to bring together emerging land-based movements, and learn from how the Scottish land reform agenda developed, in order to explore how issues around land affect people, and how a reform agenda could be developed to help address this.

How else can we think about land use?

If our dominant ways of thinking about land do not facilitate its common good use, we must develop new ones. We are particularly interested in the growing movement surrounding theories of ‘the commons’. In this view, land is a shared resource for everyone and should be treated as a common pool resource, for which all users must have roles and responsibilities regarding its management and conservation.17 We need to engage with emerging debates and new theoretical frameworks such as those relating to ‘the commons’ to engage with the UK public and initiate a wider debate about how we can manage land and for the common good to deliver shared social, economic and environmental benefits.

Calls to action

If there is a clear solution to all these issues, we haven't found it. Yet. At this stage in the process we are genuinely agnostic about what a land reform agenda should look like. However in the interest of furthering the discussion, some areas that would be interesting to explore further include:

- **Land value capture** (a tax based on the value of land owned, or on increases in that value)
- **Natural Capital accounting**18 (a system whereby environmental assets would be given a value and damages to them would need to be paid for)
- **The transfer of ownership or control of publicly owned assets to communities**
- **More transparent information on land ownership and options**
- **Increasing the diversity of land ownership**
- **Reforming subsidies and tax exemptions**

We will

Work with a wide range of stakeholders, with diverse political perspectives and ambitions for land. We can do this because while we have a clear vision about the shared benefits land use should deliver, we are pragmatic about how they should be delivered. We support land-based social enterprise because it is showing it can deliver new models of sustainable common good land use. To help form wider a land reform agenda, we want to develop an evidence base on what legislative

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changes might best facilitate a move towards new models of land use. We also want to find out what the public want from land. With that in mind, and thinking about how to support and grow the land-based social enterprise movement, we will:

- **Bring together organisations that care about land and identify common ground**: We want to get together people who care about land, from various parts of the economy, government, and third sector. Discussions need to include people from housing, heritage, social enterprise, communities, farmers, landowners, local and central government, conservation, social finance, developers and more. We have a long way to go to get all these groups engaged. However even early steps have proved promising - at our most recent ‘Making Land Work’ event participants commented on how useful it was to meet and hear from representatives of such a diverse range of groups. Even after bringing people together, identifying common ground is no easy task, but it is time for all of us to take a more active approach to identifying and addressing the social, economic and environmental impacts and purposes of land use.

- **Develop and contribute to campaigns**: We are in conversations with campaigners already and we want to build on these, in order to develop new relationships based on shared agendas for change. We are also looking at ways in which we can support the work of others.

- **Explore the evidence base for land reform**: We want to look at examples of different ways of regulating land use and to identify strategies that are backed up by evidence of what works.

- **Consult with, and engage the public on land reform**: any movement towards land reform will need public engagement. This means finding out what people are interested in and what they need. It also means supporting and promoting public discussion about land. We are inspired by the level of engagement with land issues in Scotland and want to learn from Scottish campaigners in order to kindle a similar energy for debate in the rest of the UK.

- **Prepare for major land-related policy shifts that facilitate new models of land use**: Things like land value tax and natural capital accounting remain somewhat fringe concerns. However if either of them, or other major shifts on policy, are enacted, we want new models to be ready to adapt to, and flourish in, the new conditions.
4. Conclusion

This report has considered some of the key issues facing land-based social enterprises, changes we think could help address them, and areas for further exploration. This chapter concludes the report by reiterating key strategies for moving the sector forward, and discussing the next steps for this policy work.

4.1 Immediate strategies for facilitating new models of land use

While each issue needs separate attention, there is a lot of common ground in the strategies we for different issues. In many cases actions taken to address one issue might also help solve others. The following are some general strategies that we think will develop the land-based social enterprise sector. Through our consultancy work we will be helping many of these groups to enact these recommendations.

Government

- Reform of land subsidies and taxation to focus them on incentivising common good land use.
- Introduce a means of capturing increases in land value
- Make it easier for communities to purchase or occupy local land where they can improve its management
- Strengthen legislation designed to address the market’s failure to compensate the maintenance and production of social and environmental value

Public sector

- Collect and release more land data, and ensure that its release supports common good land uses rather than just those who can avoid to exploit it
- Promote and resource cultures of innovation in commissioning and procurement that allow new models to flourish
- Give planning authorities the mandate and resources to promote strategic, innovative common good land use strategies in consultation with communities

Landowners

- Dedicate resources to innovative strategic approaches to land governance
- Develop strategies for producing social value and for social enterprise land management

Practitioners

- Understand the needs of, and build relationships with, key stakeholders including landowners, commissioners, planning authorities, and others.

Support organisations

- Be peer led, and focus support on the needs of land-based social enterprises, for example business support, networking and governance
- Improve collaboration on issues of common interest and share resources and advocacy

Funders

- Understand the needs of land-based social enterprises and direct funding accordingly, for example into guidance on new models of land management, encouraging collaboration, or training in the core skills needed to run a land-based social enterprise.
- Be realistic about what to expect from social enterprises in each circumstance
Shared Assets

- **Identify and fill knowledge gaps and develop an accessible way for land-based social enterprises and support organisations to access this, and other, information**: This might include information on, for instance, funding and support opportunities, practical decision-making toolkits, briefings on relevant government policy, guidance on negotiating legal and planning issues, case studies, event recordings, and a calendar of future events.

- **Demonstrate and evidence the potential of the sector**: Since the sector is relatively new, demonstrating its potential is still crucial to its growth. To do this we will celebrate success stories wherever possible and also attempt to draw out the key learning from them. We have already started this, with our [Making Land Work](#) website.

- **Highlight the advantages of land sharing**: Due to the high cost of land, land sharing may be the most realistic way for social enterprises to get access to land. It also has a wide range of benefits for landowners and social enterprises.

- **Developing relationships between landowners and land-based social entrepreneurs**: This will mean working with landowners, and with social enterprises, developing mutual understanding. We are particularly interested in supporting local authorities and other landowners to develop clear policies on working with land-based social enterprises.

- **Understand the diversity of land-based social enterprises and what this means for their development**: We want to understand which types of organisation work well in which situations, and indeed where social enterprise models may be inappropriate.

- **Creating a more organised sector, with a bigger voice**: Working together, it is easier to overcome shared issues. Thus a key aim for Shared Assets is to bring together individual organisations, and networks of organisations, to identify and advocate for common interests and share resources. We are particularly interested in raising awareness of the sector amongst large landowners, but will also target key decision-makers, social investors, other campaigning and third sector organisations, and the general public.

### 4.2 Developing a land reform agenda

We want to start a discussion about the structural issues that stand in the way of new models of land use for the common good. This will mean asking, and working with, others to answer some key questions about land in the UK, and to:

- **Co-create an agenda for land reform**: This will involve working with as many collaborators as possible to identify common issues and aspirations. It will also mean exploring the evidence on what options are out there and what will best help achieve common good land use

- **Develop a campaign for public engagement and legislative change**: This will involve finding out what the public care about, and targeting the key stakeholders needed to enact change

- **Prepare for change**: by pursuing the strategies discussed in Chapter 2, and others, we want to get the sector in a position to flourish if policy change addresses the more structural barriers

### 4.3 Next steps

For each of the issues discussed in this paper we have identified areas we want to pursue further. Our goal now is to find ways to explore these. We will look for opportunities to conduct research to answer the key questions and build partnerships with other organisations that share our concerns and ambitions for change.

*Final call to action: if you have an interest in any of the areas discussed in this report please [sign up to our newsletter](#) or get in touch: hello@sharedassets.org.uk*
Appendix 1: Sources and further reading

The following are a list of some of the resources that we have linked to in this report, or been inspired by at various points whilst researching the topics discussed within.


Hetherington, P. (2015), Whose Land is Our Land? The use and abuse of Britain’s forgotten acres, Policy Press.


Appendix 2: Charts from online survey of land-based social enterprises

We designed a short survey on Google Forms and sent it out to contacts through our newsletter and social media. 28 responses were received in total, from organisations that met our definition of land-based social enterprise (organisations that use land to create social and environmental value, whilst also generating income through trade or delivering services). Questions were not compulsory, so a range of base sizes exists across the different questions. While a diverse range of organisations responded, the findings are not statistically representative of the land-based social enterprise sector as a whole. Therefore, their main value is in indicating areas that may be interesting to explore further. The original survey can be found here, and remains open for responses.

Appendix Figure 1

How replicable do you think the model/innovation used by your organisation is?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We adopted or adapted a model/innovation</td>
<td>14 (58.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>previously used somewhere else</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We designed the model/innovation but it</td>
<td>8 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would probably work elsewhere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The model/innovation we use is unlikely to</td>
<td>2 (8.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work elsewhere/for other organisations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix Figure 2

Developing commercial trading income [Please indicate which of the following areas your organisation has received support for, and/or would like to receive support for in the future]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have received</th>
<th>Would like to</th>
<th>Have received and would like to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>17 (81%)</td>
<td>4 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have received</td>
<td>Have received and would like to receive more in the future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix Figure 3

Accessing loans and social finance [Please indicate which of the following areas your organisation has received support for, and/or would like to receive support for in the future]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have received</th>
<th>Would like to</th>
<th>Have received and would like to receive more in the future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (4.3%)</td>
<td>16 (69.6%)</td>
<td>6 (26.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix Figure 4

Developing markets around products [Please indicate which of the following areas your organisation has received support for, and/or would like to receive support for in the future]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have received</th>
<th>Would like to</th>
<th>Have received and would like to receive more in the future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (6.3%)</td>
<td>13 (81.3%)</td>
<td>2 (12.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix Figure 5
Appendix Figure 6

What are the most important things that your organisation requires from its legal relationship with the land?

- Ability to trade on land: 10 (38.5%)
- Ability to live on land: 8 (30.6%)
- Ability to build structures: 18 (69.2%)
- Sharing of risk with the landowner: 3 (11.5%)
- Control over management of the land: 17 (65.4%)
- Ability to run activities: 12 (46.2%)
- Ability to use land as security for funding: 11 (42.3%)
- Security of tenure: 15 (57.7%)
- Long enough lease to secure return on investment: 12 (46.2%)

Appendix Figure 7

Working with landowners [Please indicate which of the following areas your organisation has received support for, and/or would like to receive support for in the future]

- Have received: 2 (12.5%)
- Would like to receive: 13 (81.3%)
- Have received and would like to receive more in the future: 1 (6.3%)

Appendix Figure 8

Setting up leases and/or management agreements [Please indicate which of the following areas your organisation has received support for, and/or would like to receive support for in the future]

- Have received: 3 (14.3%)
- Would like to receive in the future: 13 (61.3%)
- Have received and would like to receive more in the future: 5 (23.8%)

Appendix Figure 9

Technical land management skills [Please indicate which of the following areas your organisation has received support for, and/or would like to receive support for in the future]

- Have received: 1 (5.3%)
- Would like to receive in the future: 12 (63.2%)
- Have received and would like to receive more in the future: 6 (31.6%)

Appendix Figure 10
Appendix Figure 11

Governance [Please indicate which of the following areas your organisation has received support for, and/ or would like to receive support for in the future]

- Have received: 8 (34.8%)
- Would like to receive: 7 (30.4%)
- Have received and would like to receive more: 8 (34.8%)

Appendix Figure 12

Community engagement [Please indicate which of the following areas your organisation has received support for, and/ or would like to receive support for in the future]

- Have received: 3 (15.6%)
- Would like to receive: 10 (52.6%)
- Have received and would like to receive more: 6 (31.6%)

Volunteer fatigue/ over reliance on volunteers [How important are the following land-related issues for organisations like yours?]

- Very important: 7 (29.2%)
- Quite important: 13 (54.2%)
- Not important: 4 (16.7%)