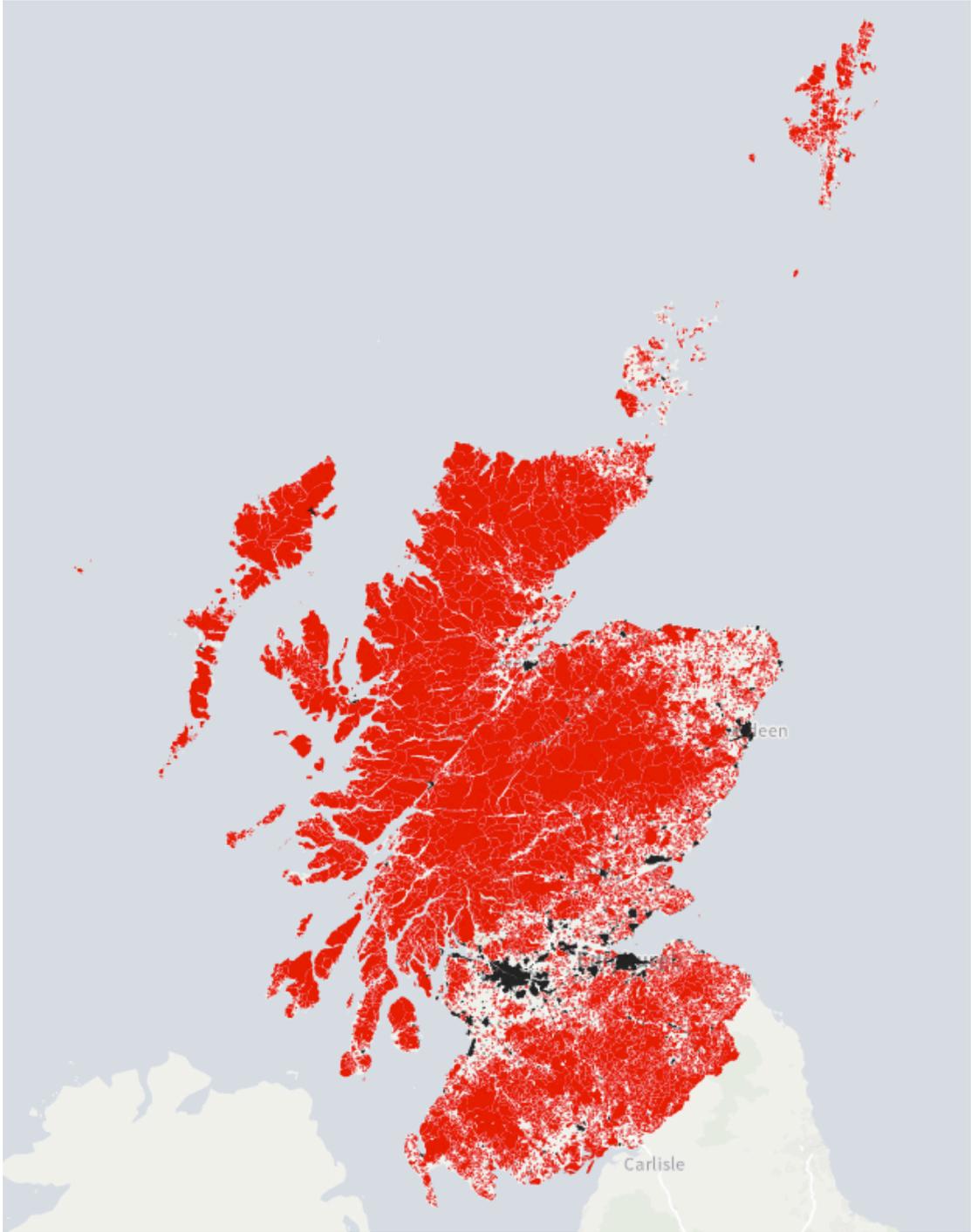


Who Owns Scotland 2025



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Andy Wightman
www.whoownsscotland.org.uk

February 2026

SUMMARY

- 83% of rural Scotland is owned by private entities (individuals, companies, trusts etc.)
- The ownership of privately-owned rural land has become more concentrated since 2012 as a result of existing owners acquiring more land.
- This trend has continued in the past year since the Who Owns Scotland Report 2024.
- 408 landowners own 50% of the privately-owned rural land compared to 421 in 2024 and 440 in 2012.
- 2413 landowners own 70% of the privately-owned rural land compared to 2588 in 2024 and 3161 in 2012.
- The public sector estate has decreased by 58,650 ha (6,3%) since 2012.
- Community landownership has increased by 44,191 ha from 172,294 ha in 2012 to 216,485 ha in 2025 (a 26% increase in extent).

Legal

No warranty or guarantee is provided for any of the data or information in this report.

Cover illustration

The map on the cover shows in red the land that forms the basis for the analysis in this report and in black, Scotland's urban settlements.

Versions

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INTRODUCTION

This annual report provides an analysis of landownership in Scotland as at 31 December 2025.

The report sets out the main types of landownership in Scotland and analyses various aspects of this including the concentration of private rural landownership and how this has changed over the past few decades.

This report has been researched and prepared using the author's own resources and no financial support has been provided for its preparation. The report contains data that is complex to analyse and there may be errors. Please do draw them to my attention.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The 2012 edition of *The Poor Had No Lawyers - Who Owns Scotland (And How They Got It)* contained statistics on the concentration of private landownership in Scotland and showed that 440 landowners owned 50% of the privately-owned rural land in Scotland.¹

In the first annual report on *Who Owns Scotland 2024*, this figure had decreased to 421 reflecting a concentration of private rural landownership over the preceding 12 years.

One year on this 2025 report documents and analyses the changes that have taken place since 2024.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this preliminary analysis is derived from www.whoownsscotland.org.uk. This data comprises 4927 landholdings covering 5.9 million ha of Scotland or 77% of Scotland's rural land and is derived from empirical research in the Registers of Scotland.

Before conducting the analysis, any landholding comprising the foreshore were removed. Separate landholdings owned by the same owner (where, for example, Jean Smith owns 5 farms across Scotland) were then merged to form one holding each for analytical purposes. This reduced the total number of records from 4927 to 3373.

A further 2945 private landholdings were then added where the extent is known but ownership is yet to be determined. This data comprises landholdings of between 100 and 250 hectares which are yet to be fully researched. Some will be owned by the same person but for the purposes of this analysis each is assumed to be owned separately. All ownership information is current as of a range of dates between January 2025 and December 2025 as checks are only made once per year.

This data was then further supplemented by confirming information on the total landholdings held by public bodies, environmental and heritage bodies, and community

¹ My definition of privately-owned rural land is all rural land (so excluding urban areas) not owned by heritage or environmental bodies (NTS, RSPB etc), community bodies (Isle of Eigg Trust, North Harris Trust etc.) or public bodies (Scottish Ministers, SNH, MoD, HIE etc).

landowners. Although much of this data is already contained within the Who Owns Scotland data, the totality of (for example) the landholdings of the National Trust for Scotland or the Secretary of State for Defence were confirmed by reference to published data from the bodies concerned. Pulling all of this data together resulted in a final dataset covering 6.35 million ha or 82.5% of the land area of rural Scotland.

High-level statistics are set out in Table 1.

Annex I contains further details on the organisations in the public, heritage and community sector who own land.

Table 1 High Level Breakdown of Scotland and Rural Landownership 2025			
	hectares (ha)	% or rural Scotland	
Scotland land area (1)	7,882,480	100.0%	
Urban Scotland (2)	179,811	2.3%	
Rural Scotland	7,702,669	97.7%	
Breakdown of rural Scotland landownership			
Private ownership	6,396,656	83.0%	
Public (3)	867,117	11.3%	
Community (4)	216,485	2.8%	
Environmental NGOs (6)	122,233	1.6%	
Heritage & Culture (6)	89,784	1.2%	
Educational (7)	10,394	0.1%	
(1) Scotland's land area is derived from Ordnance Survey digital boundaries of Mean High Water Springs			
(2) National Records of Scotland Settlements dataset (514 settlements of over 500 population)			
(3) Public ownership includes Scottish Ministers, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Water etc.			
(4) Scottish Government, 2025. Community Ownership in Scotland 2024. (November 2025) plus author's own data			
(5) Environmental NGOs include RSPB, John Muir Trust, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Trees for Life etc.			
(6) Heritage owners include National Trust for Scotland, Church of England, Church of Scotland etc.			
(7) Comprises Universities			

WHO OWNS SCOTLAND 2025

Scotland's pattern of rural landownership has long been characterised by the small number of people who own a large proportion of it.² Table 2 provides an analysis of the 83% of Scotland owned by private entities.

² See Callander (1986) A Pattern of Landownership in Scotland (Hagend Publications, Finzean) & Wightman (2024) The Poor Had No Lawyers - Who Owns Scotland (And How They Got It) Birlinn, Edinburgh.

% extent of privately-owned rural land 2025	No. of owners	Extent owned by these owners (ha)
10%	15	659,240
20%	47	1,279,544
30%	107	1,920,823
40%	212	2,559,791
50%	408	3,199,224
60%	877	3,838,175
70%	2413	4,4775,803

THE CHANGING PATTERN OF LANDOWNERSHIP

The pattern of landownership has changed over the centuries. At times it became more concentrated and at other times was diluted as a consequence of legal, economic and political factors. Table 3 tracks the changing pattern since 1872. Up until the end of the 20th century, the pattern was becoming more diluted though there is evidence of some re-concentration at the 60% mark. This should be treated with caution though as the 1970 data is not reliable.

Between 1995 and some point between then and 2012, the dilution continues as larger estates slowly break up. From 2012, we have good data of comparable quality and it is from this point on that there is clear evidence of the re-concentration of private rural landownership.

% of private rural land	1872	1970	1995	2012	2024	2,025
10%	3	18	17	16	16	15
20%	21	51	53	50	49	47
30%	34	110	116	111	111	107
40%	63	207	220	224	219	212
50%	118	370	412	440	421	408
60%	196	1,180	854	989	921	877
70%	**	**	**	3,161	2588	2,413
** insufficient data						

This trend is confirmed by the results in this report which reveal that just in this last year, the number of owners owning 50% of Scotland’s privately owned rural land has dropped from 421 in 2024 to 408 in 2025. The trend is the same at the 60% and 70% thresholds. For the 10% and 20% thresholds, the concentrating trend goes as far back as 1970.

Within the 50% of privately-owned rural land occupied by the largest holdings, there have been ownership changes with some landowners decreasing the size of their landholdings but others accumulating more land (see Table 8). Beyond this 50%, land is now held in fewer hands due to enlargement of smaller holdings. In both cases, the dominant trend of the past 12 years is accumulation and expansion of land holdings by existing landowners, with 50% of land sales of 500 ha and above being acquired by owners who already own land in Scotland.³

This trend is illustrated in graphical form below in Figure 1. The red (50%) and pink (60%) bars show the re-concentration in fewer hands from some point between 1995 and 2012 (numbers of landowners on y axis on left).

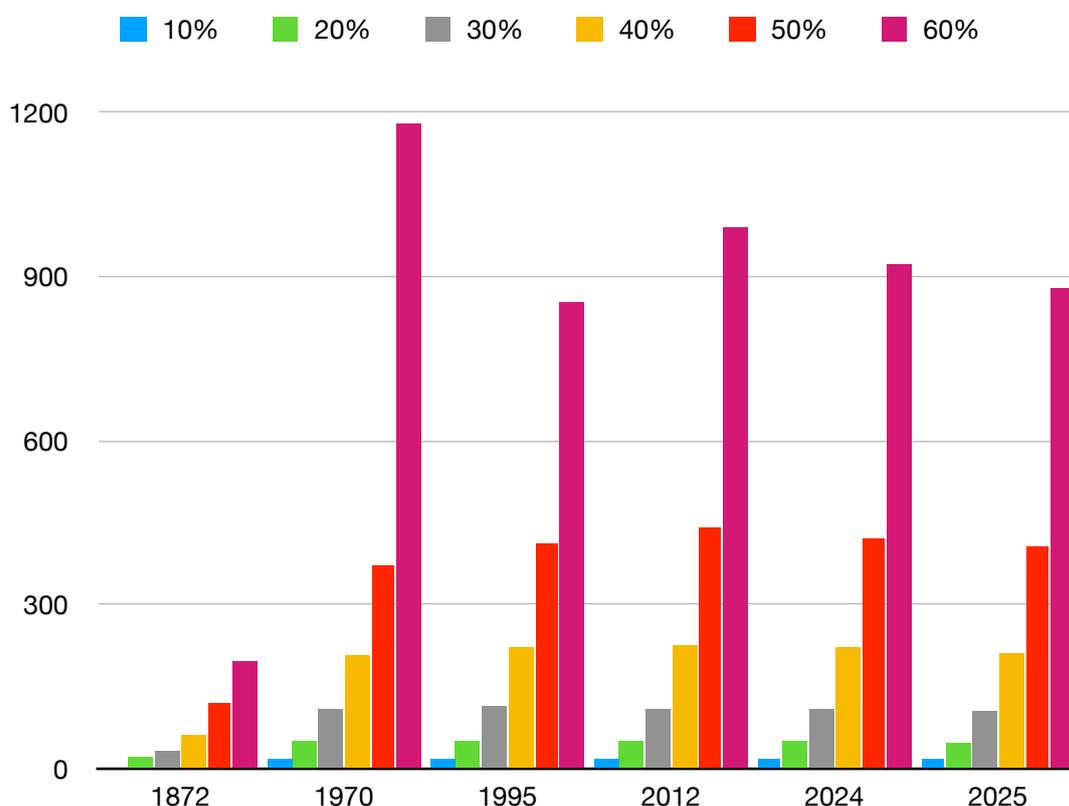


Figure 1. Concentration of Private Rural Landownership 1872 - 2025

Within rural land the extent of privately-owned land has also changed due to changes in the ownership of public, community and heritage land (Table 4).

³ See Table 2 in Rural Land Sales 2024 (2026) available here <https://andywrightman.scot/2026/02/rural-land-market-report-2024/>

Sector	Extent 2012 (ha)	Extent 2025 (ha)	Change (ha) since 2012	% increase/ (decrease)
Private ownership	6,410,060	6,396,656	-13,404	-0.21%
Public ownership	925,767	867,117	-58,650	- 6.3%
Community ownership	172,294	216,485	44,191	+ 25.6%
Environmental ownership	102,968	122,233	19,265	+18.7%
Heritage ownership	91,580	89,784	-1,796	-2.0%
Educational	0	10,394	10,934	+ 100%
TOTAL	7,702,669	7,702,669		

Public ownership has decreased by 58,650 ha (6.3%) since 2012 with the past year continuing that trend. whilst land owned by community and environmental organisations has increased by a total of 63,456 ha. With the recent activity by Universities, educational ownership has increased by 10,934 ha. The aggregate effect of these changes is that the ownership of rural land has moved from private and public to wider not-for-profit entities.

As a consequence, the extent of privately-owned rural land has **decreased** by 13,404 ha (0.21%). This difference can distort the comparison of privately-owned rural land from 2012 - 2025 since the extent of it has changed. One way of excluding this distortion is to examine the number of owners who collectively own an extent of land above defined thresholds as set out in Table 5.

Total private land (ha)	No. owners 2012	No. owners 2025	% of private rural land 2025
500,000 ha	11	10	8.10%
1 million ha	32	31	15.84%
1.5 million ha	67	65	23.60%
2 million ha	122	117	31.29%
2.5 million ha	211	200	39.11%
3 million ha	354	332	46.90%
3.5 million ha	626	573	54.74%
4 million ha	1268	1106	62.54%
4.5 million ha	3380	2512	70.35%

Note (1) For example, 211 owners owned a total of 2.5 million ha in 2012. In 2024 it is 200.

The analysis in Table 5 illustrates that up until a total land area of around 1.5 million hectares there is little change in the concentration of private rural landownership but beyond this, an increased concentration becomes evident with 868 fewer landowners owning 4.5 million ha (70.35%) of privately-owned rural land in 2025 compared with 2012.

The pattern of increasing concentration is therefore observed in percentage terms within the very slightly smaller extent of privately-owned land (Table 3) and is also observed in absolute numbers of those owning defined cumulative amounts (Table 5).

FURTHER ANALYSIS

Size Classes

Size Class (ha)	No. of holdings	Cumulative No. of holdings	Extent (ha)	Cumulative ha	% of private rural land	cumulative %
> 40,000	7	7	408,073	408,073	6.4%	6.4%
30,000 - 39,999	4	11	142,038	550,111	2.2%	8.6%
20,000 - 29,999	16	27	386,047	936,158	6.0%	14.6%
10,000 - 19,999	52	79	723,848	1,660,006	11.3%	26.0%
5,000 - 9,999	116	195	816,662	2,476,668	12.8%	38.7%
3,000 - 4,999	134	329	514,763	2,991,431	8.0%	46.8%
1,000 - 2,999	438	767	745,947	3,737,378	11.7%	58.4%
500 - 999	541	1,308	374,078	4,111,456	5.8%	64.3%
200 - 499	1,502	2,810	451,048	4,562,504	7.1%	71.3%
TOTAL	2,810		4,562,504		71.3%	

Table 6 shows, for example, that there are 767 owners of privately-owned rural land owning holdings of over 1000 ha in extent accounting for 3.74 million ha or 58.4% of privately-owned rural land.

The Changing Top 25 Landowners

Table 7 lists the top 25 largest landowners in Scotland today (owning 1,742,552 ha or 22.6% of rural Scotland) and Table 8 lists the top 25 **private** landowners (owning 893,871 ha or 14% of privately-owned rural land).

The increased concentration of private landownership over the past 13 years is driven by existing (or in the case of Gresham House, new) landowners expanding their landholdings by acquiring more land. This is illustrated by the green highlighted entries in Table 8 each of which reflects an owner who has expanded their landholding over the past 13 years.

The growth in extent of these expanding estates more than offsets the reduction in the hectareage of Buccleuch Estates highlighted in red. The most significant changes in the rankings of the largest landowners since 2012 are as follows.

- Wildland Ltd (Anders Povlsen) has expanded its landholdings by over 38% from 64,457 ha in 2012 to 89,061 ha in 2025.
- Buccleuch Estates has reduced its landholdings by 34% from 97,890 ha in 2012 to 66,199 ha in 2025.
- Gresham House Ltd. owned no land in Scotland in 2012 and now owns more than 73,000 ha of land via a number of Scottish Limited Partnerships and other vehicles making it the second largest private landowner in Scotland.⁴
- Strathconon Estates Ltd. has expanded its landholdings by 54% from 28,266 ha in 2012 to 43,511 ha in 2025 through the acquisition of Scardroy Estate in 2013, Ledgowan Estate in 2017 and Scatwell Estate in 2025..
- Uig and Hamnavay Estates Ltd has expanded its landholdings in Lewis by adding a further 9506 ha to the the 18,264ha owned by its predecessor in 2012.
- Corrour Estate has expanded by 19% from 19,363 ha in 2012 to 23,037 ha in 2025.

Beyond the top 25, there are many other new landowners and others who are expanding their holdings, typically financial investment companies based in the City of London. These include the Foresight Group, Auchencairn LLP, Commercial Forestry LLP, and Oxygen Conservation Ltd.

Changes in 2025

Since the Who Owns Scotland Report 2024, both Strathconon Estates Ltd., Gresham House and Oxygen Conservation Ltd. have expanded their landholdings together with many other financial investment companies. The Clan Donald Estate on the Isle of Skye was sold to a Canadian financier. The extent of land owned by the top 25 private landowners increased by 24,980 ha from 868,891 in 2024 to 893,871 in 2025.

⁴ This extent of land represents the land owned by Gresham House that I have been able to determine as at 31 December 2025. There is more to uncover.

Table 7 Top 25 Largest Landowners 2025

	Landholding	Sector	Hectares	Owner
1	Forestry and Agriculture estates	Public	725,128	Scottish Ministers
2	Glen Feshie & other holdings	Private	89,061	Wildland Ltd.
3	NTS properties	Environment	74,140	National Trust for Scotland
4	Gresham House properties	Private	73,064	Gresham House Ltd SLPs
5	Buccleuch Estates	Private	66,199	Buccleuch Estates Ltd
6	RSPB properties	Environment	56,821	RSPB
7	Atholl Estates	Private	46,869	Atholl Trustees & Sarah Troughton
8	Mamore & Killiechonate Estate	Private	46,764	Simec Lochaber Hydropower 2 Ltd
9	Strathconon Estate	Private	43,511	Strathconon Estates Ltd.
10	Invercauld Estate	Private	42,605	Captain Farquharson's Trusts
11	Reay Estate	Private	38,319	Trustees of 4th Duke of Westminster
12	Seafield Estate	Private	38,013	Earl of Seafield and Trusts
13	South Uist Estate	Community	37,183	South Uist Estates Ltd.
14	Crown Estate Scotland	Public	35,523	HM King Charles III (Crown Estate)
15	Sutherland estate	Private	33,800	Executors of Countess of Sutherland
16	Scottish Natural Heritage	Public	32,939	Scottish Natural Heritage
17	Blackmount & Glen Etive Estate	Private	31,906	Philip Fleming
18	Braulen & Glenavon Estate	Private	28,717	Andras Ltd. and Glenavon Ltd.
19	Stornoway Estate	Community	28,209	Stornoway Trust
20	Uig & Hamnaway Estate	Private	27,770	Uig and Hamanavay Estates Ltd.
21	Locheil Estate	Private	26,419	Trustees of Donald Cameron
22	Conaglen Estate	Private	26,223	Trustees of John & Richard Guthrie
23	Killilan, Inverinate & Benula	Private	25,379	Smech Properties Ltd.
24	Applecross Estate	Private	25,188	Applecross Estate Trust
25	North Harris Estate	Community	24,802	The North Harris Trust
	TOTAL		1,724,552	

Table 8 Top 25 Largest Private Landowners 2025 (see page 8 for colour coding)

	Landholding	Sector	Hectares	Owner
1	Glen Feshie & other holdings	Private	89,061	Wildland Ltd.
2	Gresham House properties	Private	73,064	Gresham House Ltd SLPs
3	Buccleuch Estates	Private	66,199	Buccleuch Estates Ltd
4	Atholl Estates	Private	46,869	Atholl Trustees & Sarah Troughton
5	Mamore & Killiechonate Estate	Private	46,764	Simec Lochaber Hydropower 2 Ltd
6	Strathconon Estate	Private	43,511	Strathconon Estates Ltd.
7	Invercauld Estate	Private	42,605	Captain Farquharson's Trusts
8	Reay Estate	Private	38,319	Trustees of 4th Duke of Westminster
9	Seafield Estate	Private	38,013	Earl of Seafield and Trusts
10	Sutherland estate	Private	33,800	Executors of Countess of Sutherland
11	Blackmount & Glen Etive Estate	Private	31,906	Philip Fleming
12	Braulen & Glenavon Estate	Private	28,717	Andras Ltd. and Glenavon Ltd.
13	Uig & Hamnaway Estate	Private	27,770	Uig and Hamanavay Estates Ltd.
14	Locheil Estate	Private	26,419	Trustees of Donald Cameron
15	Conaglen Estate	Private	26,223	Trustees of John & Richard Guthrie
16	Killilan, Inverinate & Benula	Private	25,379	Smech Properties Ltd.
17	Applecross Estate	Private	25,188	Applecross Estate Trust
18	Drummond Estate	Private	24671	Baroness Willoughby de Eresby
19	Birse Estate	Private	23,423	Dickinson Trust as Trustees for the Barmekin Trust
20	Cawdor Estate	Private	23,147	Cawdor Trusts, Colin RV Campbell, Isabella Campbell & Angelika Campbell
21	Corroure Estate	Private	23,037	The Corroure Property Company
22	Gairloch Estate	Private	22,806	Duncan James Mackenzie, Younger of Gairloch
23	Corrievarkie Estate	Private	22,738	Compania Financiera Waterville SA
24	Roxburgh Estate	Private	22,519	Duke of Roxburghe and Sunnlaws Development Company Ltd.
25	Balmoral Estate	Private	21,723	Canup Ltd.
	TOTAL		893,871	

Legal Status

Land can be owned via a wide range of legal vehicles. The only significant restriction on ownership is that land can only be owned and registered by someone over the age of 16. Prior to the abolition of feudal tenure in 2004, firms could not hold title but now they can. Table 9 analyses a number of broad categories of legal entity. The analysis covers 3210 landholdings covering 4,519,232ha of land (71% of privately-owned rural land).

Entity	No. of holdings	Extent (ha)	% of private rural land
Individuals (UK residents)	1862	1,413,893	22.1%
UK Companies (UK owned) (1)	442	960,819	15.0%
Trusts	274	992,446	15.5%
Offshore entities (2)	100	348,986	5.5%
UK Companies (Offshore) (3)	85	354,901	5.5%
Firms	365	212,234	3.3%
Scottish Limited Partnership (4)	10	103,132	1.6%
Limited Liability Partnership	33	74,250	1.2%
Individuals (resident offshore)	39	58,571	0.9%
TOTAL	3210	4,519,232	70.6%
Notes			
(1) This refers to UK registered companies where the companies are owned and controlled by persons resident in the UK.			
(2) This refers to legal entities that are registered in a jurisdiction outwith the UK.			
(3) This refers to UK registered companies where the beneficial owner is an individual, a trust or another company residing or registered in a jurisdiction outwith the UK			
(4) This includes the 244 individual parcels of land owned by Gresham House SLPs			

Landowning Charities

Table 10 lists the most prominent charitable landowners excluding those listed (or eligible to be listed) as community landowners or heritage landowners in Tables 12 and 13.

Charitable Body	Jurisdiction	Hectares
Applecross Estate Trust	Scotland	25,188
Blair Charitable Trust	Scotland	20,745
Mount Stuart Trust	Scotland	14,157
Church Commissioners for England	England & Wales	8,282
Aberdeen Endowments Trust	Scotland	4,256
Macrobert Trust	Scotland	2,855
Kith Trust	Scotland	1,966
Heritage Concern Foundation	Scotland	1,306
University of Edinburgh	Scotland	1,237
Mackintosh Foundation	England & Wales	991
SRUC	Scotland	689
Barrahormid Trust	Scotland	632
College of St John the Evangelist at University of Cambridge	England & Wales	575
Shetland Charitable Trust	Scotland	551
Chalmers Trust	Scotland	517
Ardnamurchan Trust	Scotland	458
University of St Andrews	Scotland	308
Guildry Incorporation of Perth	Scotland	262
Dewcross Centre for Moral Technology	Scotland	231
TOTAL		85,206

ANNEX I Public, Heritage, Environment and Community Landowners

This Annex lists the largest public, heritage and community landowners.

Organisation	Extent 2025 (ha)
Scottish Ministers (National Forest)	626,159
Scottish Ministers (agricultural estates)	98,969
The Crown (Crown Estate Scotland)	35,523
Scottish Natural Heritage	32,939
Scottish Water	24,441
Local Authorities	22,572
Secretary of State for Defence	18,239
Highland & Islands Enterprise	3,987
TOTAL	862,829

Analysing landownership by public bodies is a frustrating endeavour exacerbated by the poor quality of so much data. Some of these bodies publish no data or unreliable data and so some provide data but in a format that is difficult and time-consuming to interpret. The three most reliable sources are Scottish Natural Heritage, Crown Estate Scotland and the Secretary of State for Defence (Ministry of Defence).

Organisation	Extent 2025 (ha)
National Trust for Scotland	75,925
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	57,504
The John Muir Trust	24,284
Scottish Wildlife Trust	16,454
The Woodland Trust	13,286
Church of Scotland General Trustees	5,010
Trees for Life	4,037
Borders Forest Trust	3,441
Plantlife International	1,921
Cashel Forest Trust	1,306
TOTAL	203,168

Table 13 Main Community Landowners 2025	
Organisation	Extent 2025 (ha)
South Uist Estates Ltd.	37,138
Stornoway Trust	28,029
The North Harris Trust	24,802
Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn	23,214
Assynt Foundation	17,649
Urras Sgìre Oighreachd Bharabhais Community Co.	13,659
Pairc Trust	11,266
Assynt Crofters Trust	8,116
West Harris Trust	7,813
The Knoydart Foundation	6,784
Melness Crofters' Estate	5,052
Urras Oighreachd Charlabhaigh	4,788
The Langholm Initiative	4,237
Coigach Community Development Company	3,167
Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust	2,945
North West Mull Community Woodland Co Ltd.	2,717
Borve and Annishader Township	1,848
The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust	1,373
Garbh Allt Community Initiative	1,328
Culag Community Woodland Trust Ltd.	1,188
TOTAL	207,113

Table 13 accounts for 20 community landowners who collectively own 96% of all community owned land in Scotland (excluding common good land).