



Scottish Land Commission
Coimisean Fearainn na h-Alba

Delivering more homes and better places - The Role of Land

Scotland's housing crisis – PHS

Thursday 22 May, David Stewart, Scottish
Land Commission

Pencaitland, East Lothian



Rainings Close, Inverness



Achertairn, Gairloch



Content

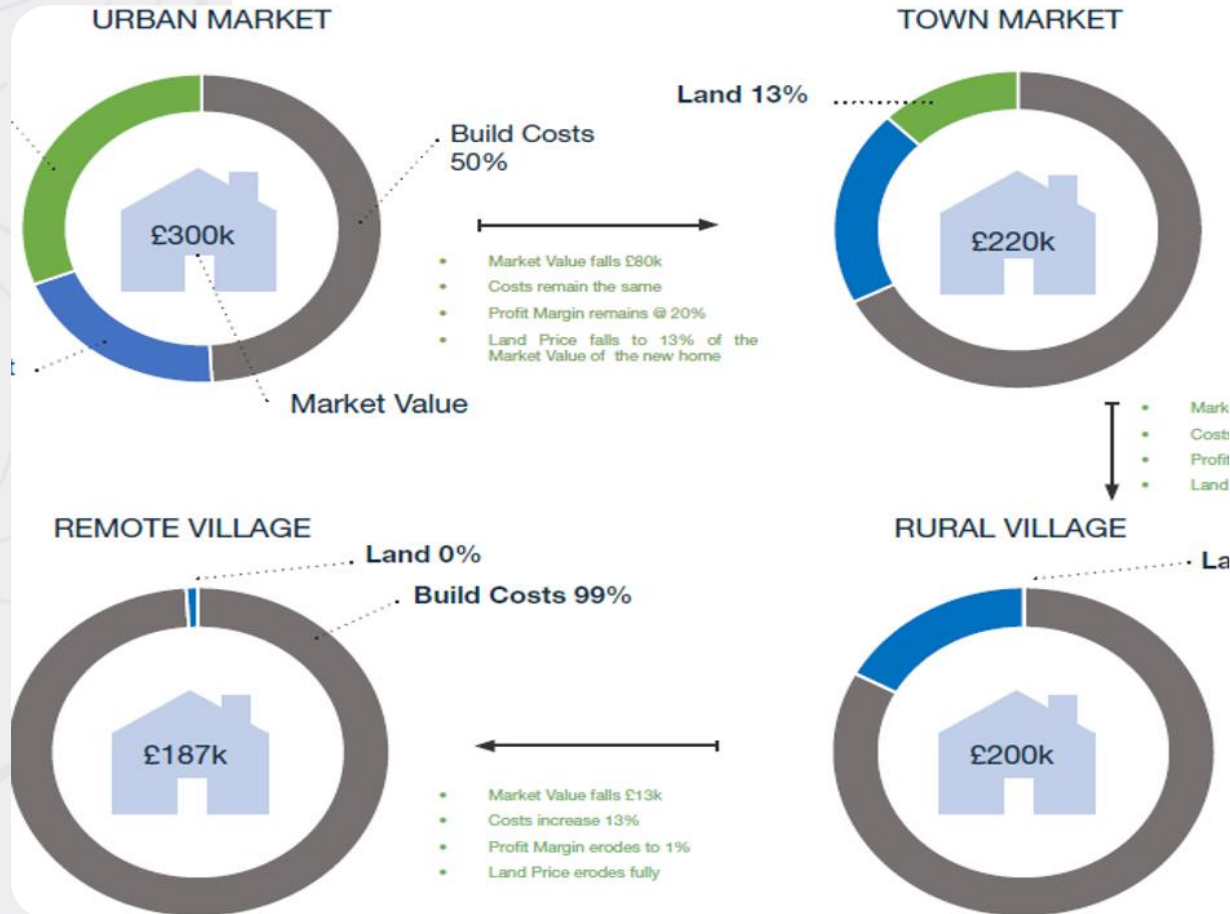
- How the housing land market works and what this means for meeting need and creating places
- Vacant and Derelict Land – scope for re-use and challenges
- Rural Housing – need, challenges and solutions
- Reforming the housing land market to deliver more homes and better places
- Conclusion

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The housing land market

Land and housebuilding

Savills, 2020





Land and housebuilding

- Significant risk for developers taking land from identification to build out
- To manage risk and provide shareholder return leads to a focus on high value areas/properties and larger greenfield sites
- Model based on market absorption – so build out rate linked to price
- SMEs (who developed in rural areas or small towns) have declined since 2009 crisis

Housing land market and outcomes

- Volume housebuilders often focus on high value greenfield sites and develop low density places designed around car use (CaCHE 2020)
- Market failure in many areas – town centres, brownfield, rural
- Strong affordable housing programme
- But – gap in delivery – key worker/mid market housing

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Vacant and derelict land

Why VDL matters and why review progress

- Legacy of Scotland's rapid shift from an industrial to a service based economy
- VDL is harmful to physical and mental health, concentrated in low income neighbourhoods
- VDL is an opportunity for housing – densification/20 minute neighbourhoods in line with NPF4
- 4 years since Task Force Recommendations – time to take stock
- Importance of land re-use and net zero increased since original work

Progress...



Re-use

- Housing most common re-use (51% of sites; Clydeplan accounts for over half) but increasing costs may slow progress
- Significant progress in re-use of small harmful sites in communities
- Danger of new legacy as shopping and work patterns change

Outlook

- Steady progress in VDL Re-use
- Supportive policy environment for re-use (NPF4, National Infrastructure Plan)
- Two positive new land re-use initiatives
 - ✓ VDL Hub
 - ✓ KLTR Ownerless Property Transfer Scheme
- Housing – need for brownfield fund for private developers, need for tax reform to incentivise land and building re-use?

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Land for rural housing

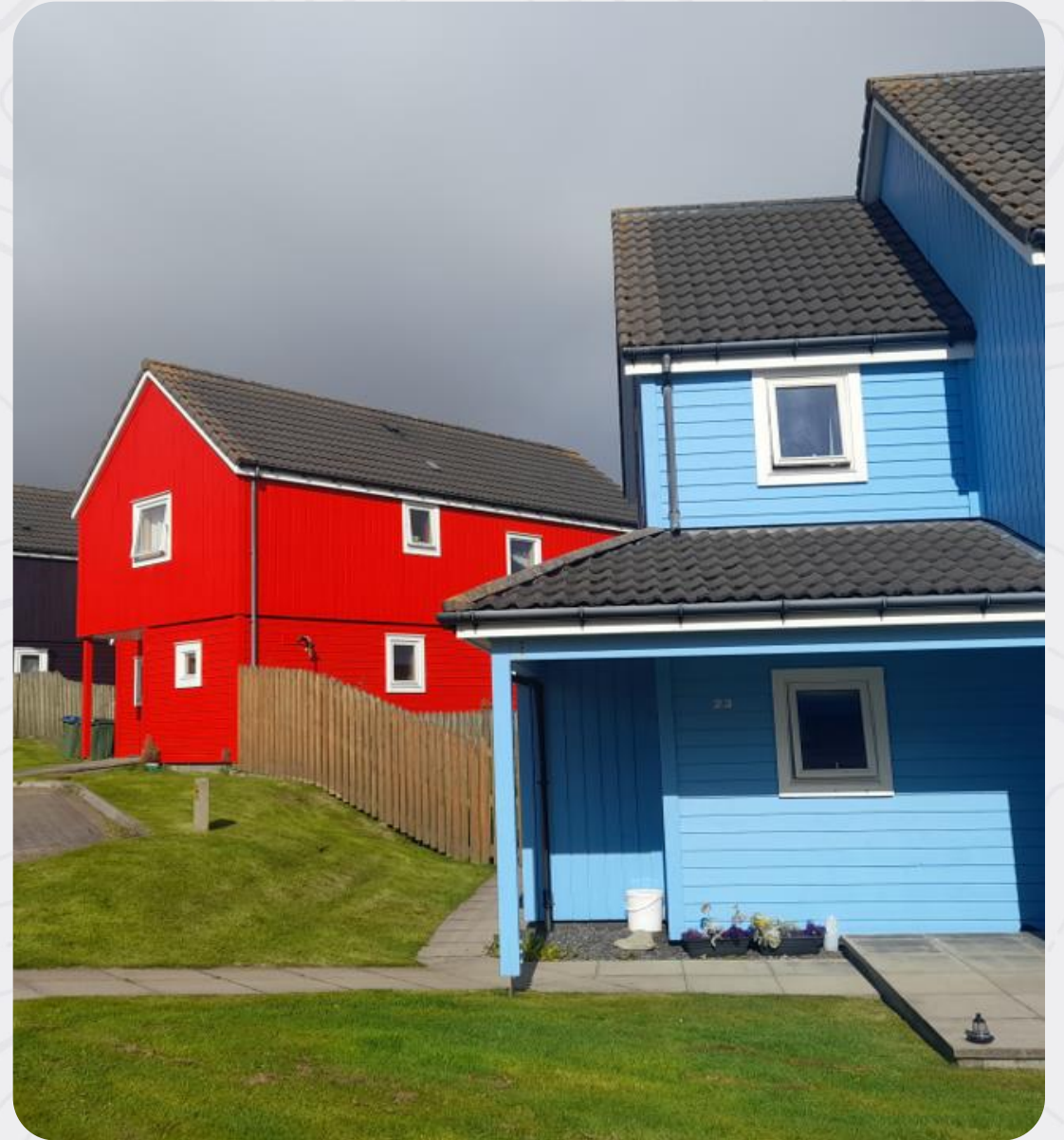
Why land for rural housing matters

Renewables and major economic growth opportunities



Why land for rural housing matters

Depopulation and demographic change in rural and remote communities



Land for rural housing proposals

- Public sector pro-active in buying land and bringing it forward for development
- Public bodies and NGOs to review landholdings suitable for housing. Best value is not highest sales price
- Planning to be supportive of sustainable development and use tools (MCA, CPO, LPP) to unlock land

**Delivering more homes and
better places – Towards a
public interest led approach**



Public Interest Led Development (PILD) and Land Value Capture (LVC)

PILD

- long-term, ambitious vision well-resourced, multi-disciplinary teams
- provision of “patient capital”, willingness to accept risk

LVC

- Scope to capture land value uplift to deliver better places
- Role of planning policies and land pooling

Wuppertal, DE



Hilversum, NL



Biel, CH



Conclusion

- Our housing land market does not, on the whole, deliver in rural Scotland or in town centres and brownfield sites
- The volume housebuilding model often delivers developments designed around car use on greenfield sites
- To deliver more homes and better places the public sector needs to take a more pro-active approach but this needs resource and skills
- Opportunities – Planning Skills programme, Key Agencies Group, role for PHS?



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Thank you.

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Scottish Government (SG) – Development of the Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Statistics (SVDLS)

- **SVDLS MAP** - Based on user feedback and recommendations from the Vacant and Derelict Land Task Force the SG has produced an interactive map of vacant and derelict land sites that is available on the SG website [Explore the Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey](#). Current data is for 2023 and the next update will be in July/August 2025.
- **SVDL HUB** - the map can be found on a new SVDL Hub which has also been developed in parallel by SG. The Hub brings together VDL policy (planning and regeneration), statistics, the map and a series of before and after VDL case studies. An additional module on 'VDL and Contamination' is in draft and the SG would like to include a 'VDL and Health' module in 2026. The hub is available on the SG website [Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land: Information Hub | Our Place](#)
- The SG already provide Public Health Scotland with an annual analysis of SVDLS and its proximity to where people live, which is one example of the link between SVDLS and the health topic.
- The SG lead is Charles Brown (Senior Assistant Statistician) – contact charles.brown@gov.scot.