

Review of landownership data and analyses contributing to the development of the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill



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RESAS

Rural & Environment Science
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Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Abstract

The Scotland’s Land Reform Futures project (JHI-E3-1), as well as additional policy responsive projects, have involved dataset review, integration, and novel analyses seeking to inform the development of the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill (currently passing through Parliament).

This has included work identifying and characterising large landholdings that may fall in scope of provisions set out in the Bill and explores the impact of spatial contiguity of large landholdings (at the request of the Land Reform Bill team).

Regular meetings and correspondence with the Bill team has raised awareness of issues surrounding elements of the Bill, built enduring networks with key Scottish Government officials involved in the drafting of the Bill (several of whom have shared positive feedback on the value of this policy-focussed analysis), and was cited in the Stage 1 report on the Bill by the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee.

Still to come...

A storymap is in production which showcases some of the practical data issues to be faced should the current Land Reform (Scotland) Bill pass. This includes many of the elements presented here. It is currently in review and will be published shortly.

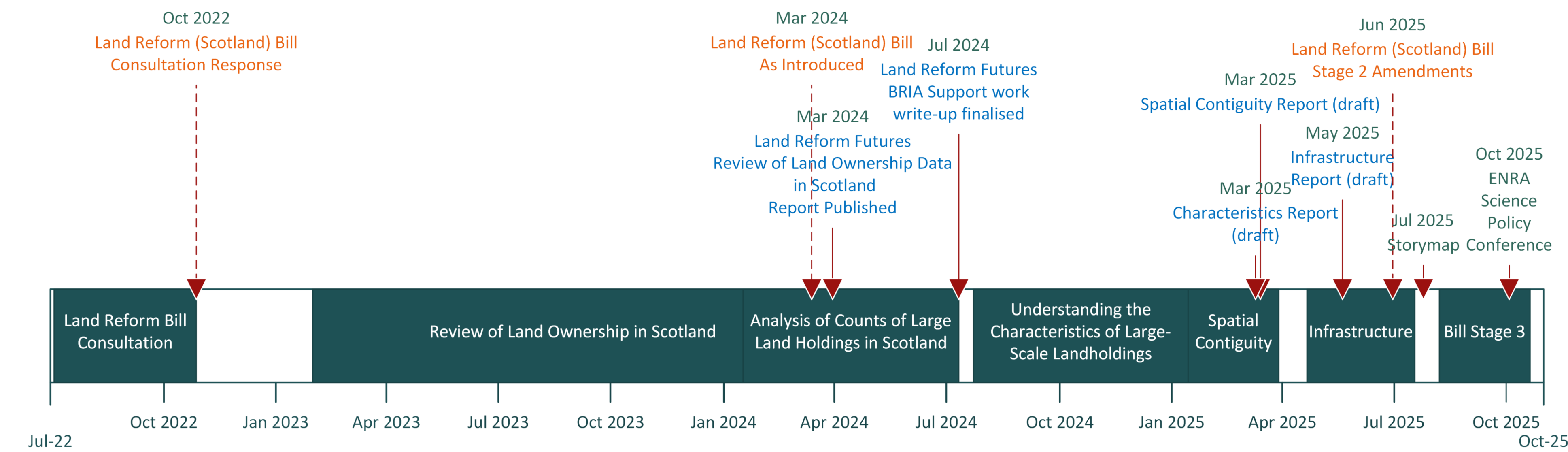
Technical reports covering the details are also in the pipeline and will be released in due course.

The Review of land ownership data in Scotland is available here:

<https://zenodo.org/records/10727568>



Timeline of activities with key milestones

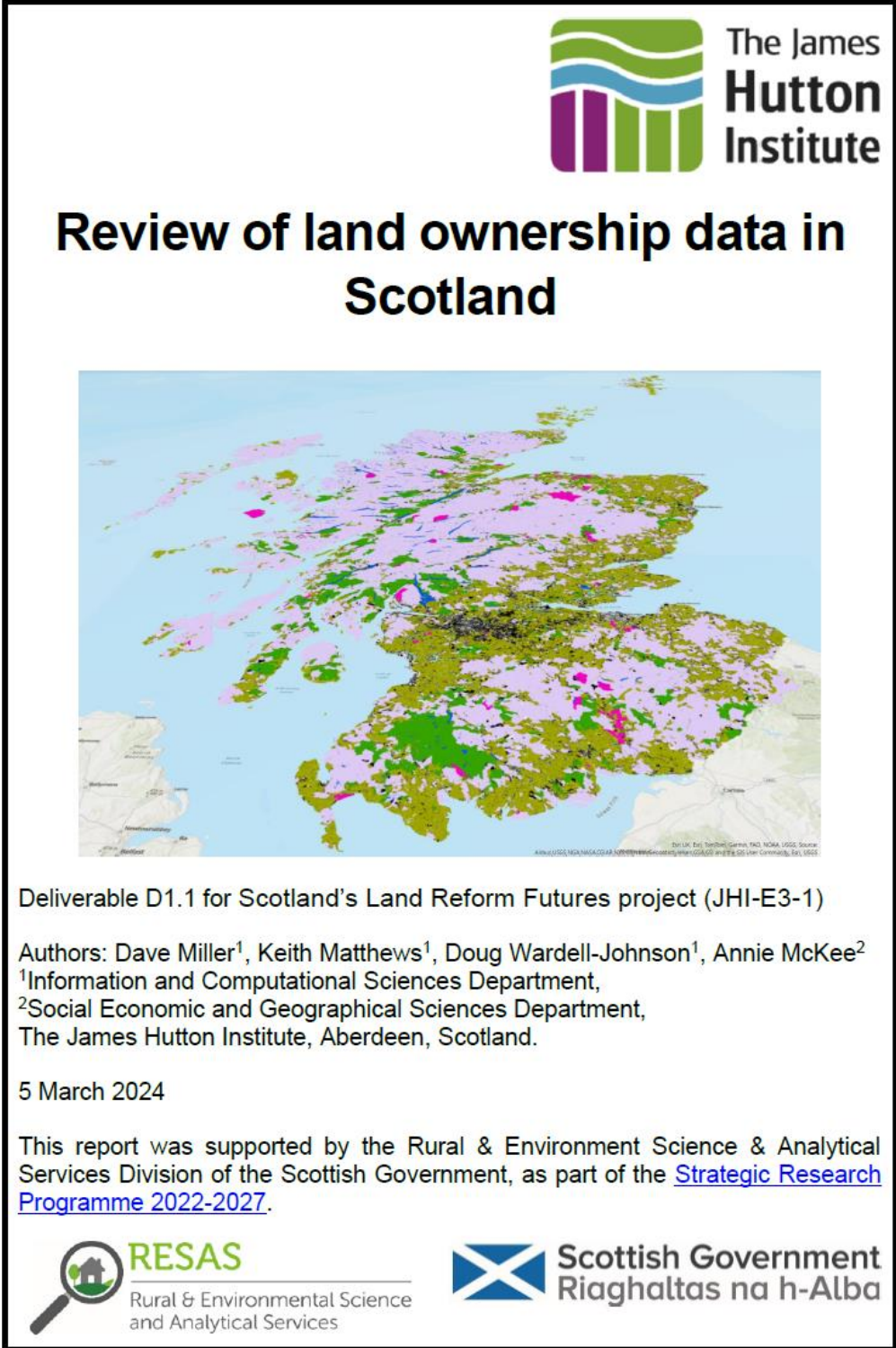


Results

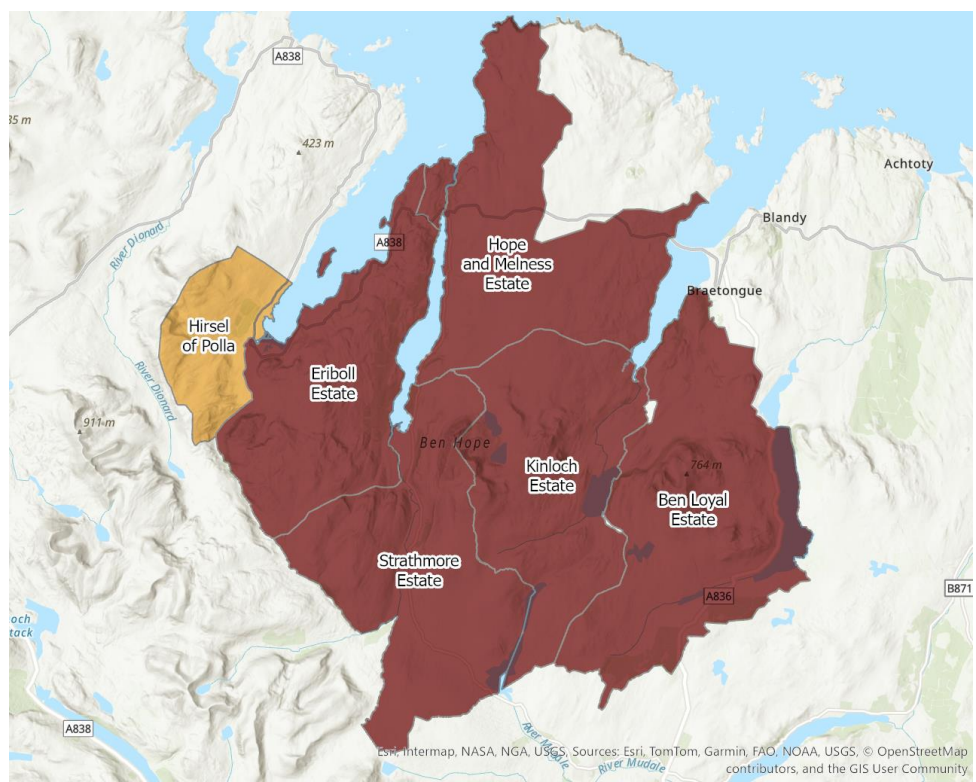
The selection of outputs presented here showcases the range of analyses undertaken in support of the Bill. The review outlined the fragmented nature of land ownership data in Scotland – an issue which must be addressed should the Bill come to pass.

Relying on what data there is, particularly the Who Owns Scotland² dataset, the research team estimated the number of landholdings in scope, analysed their characteristics, looked at tenure patterns, assessed the impact of infrastructure, evaluated contiguity thresholds, and offered a possible way forward to address the issue of concentration.

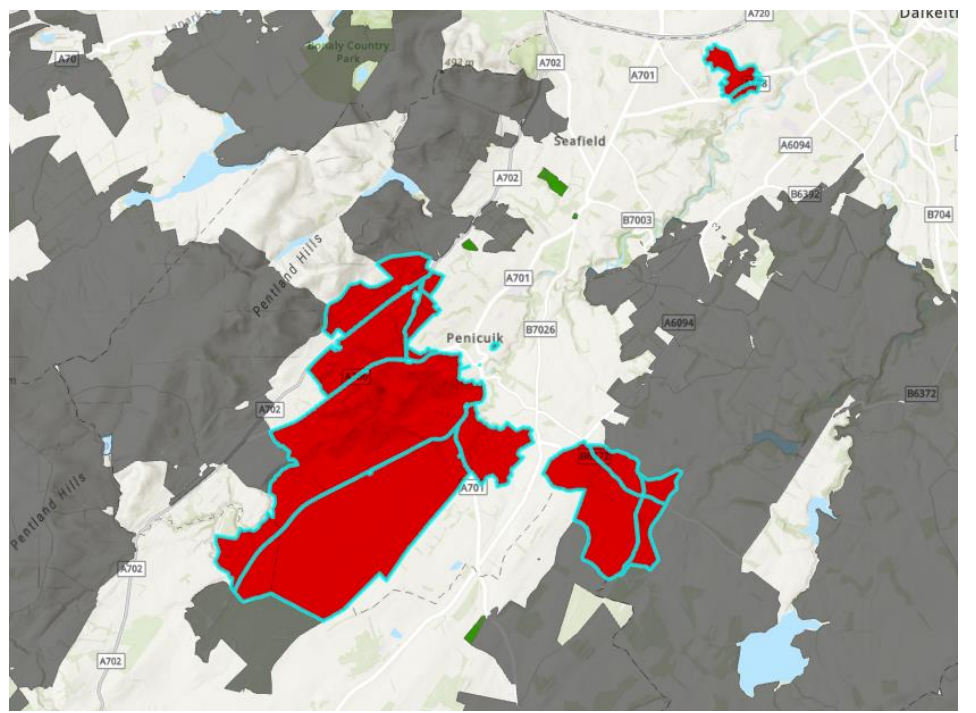
This has helped the Bill team understand practical issues that need to be considered should the Bill pass.



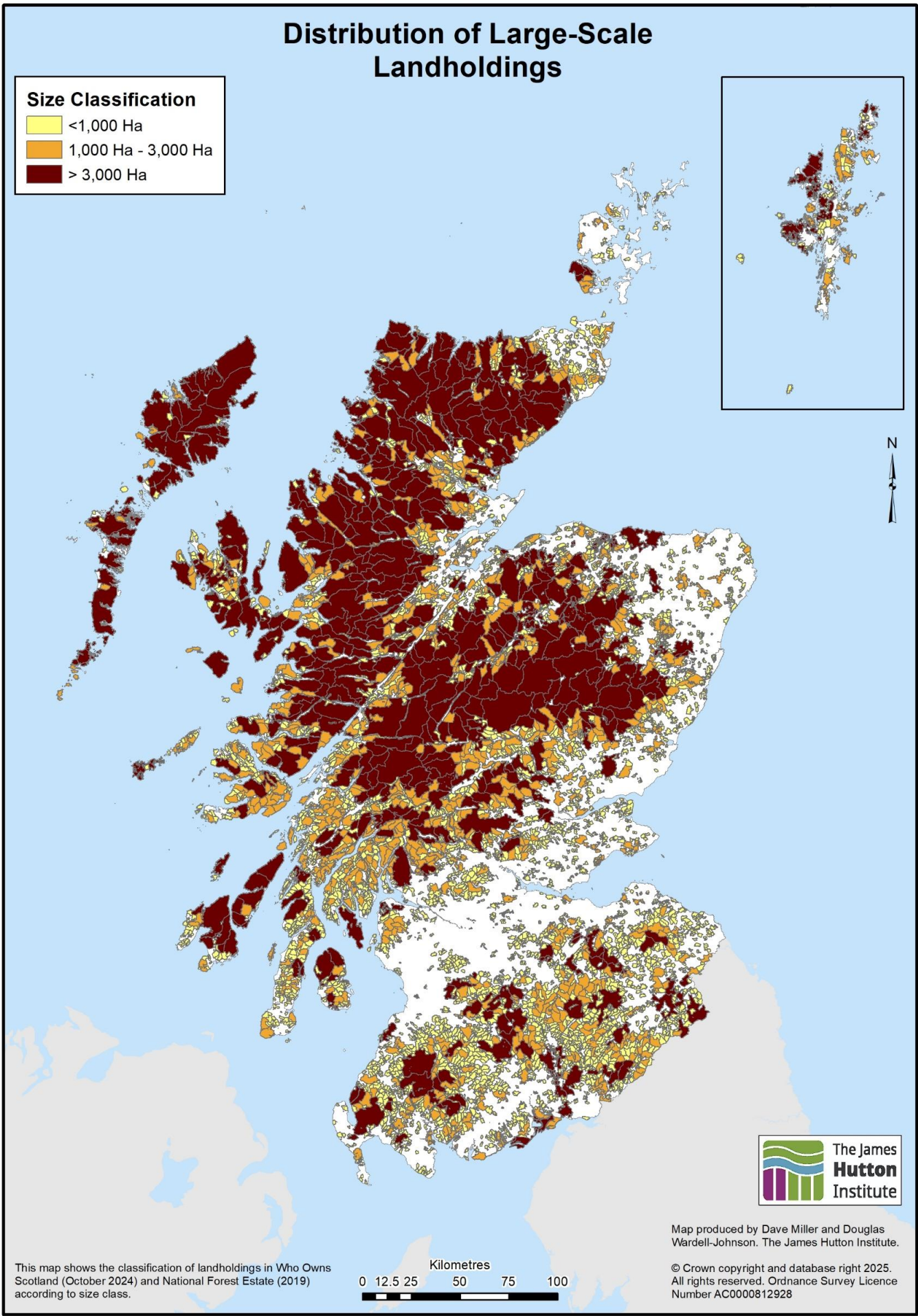
Review – does the data you need exist?



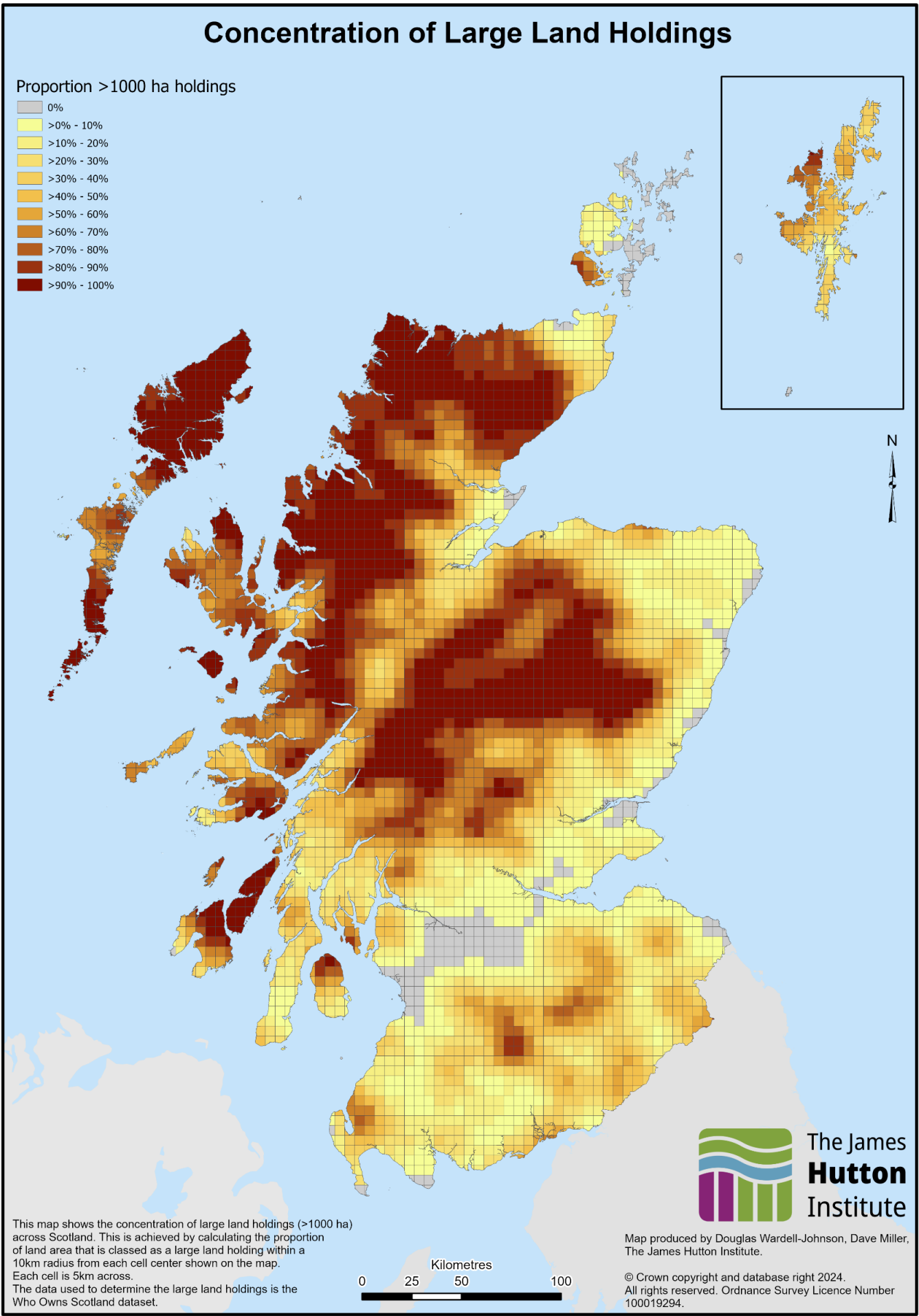
Contiguity – what do you count together?



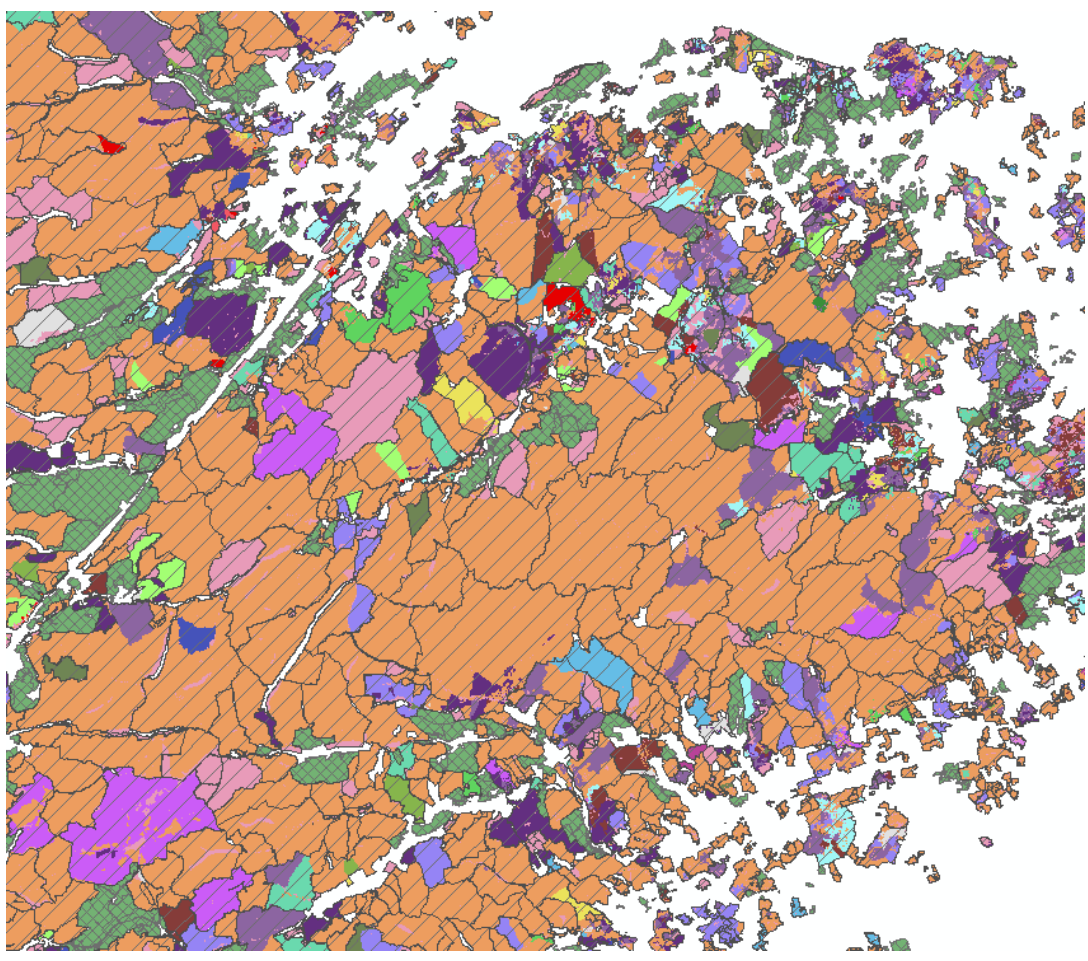
Contiguity – what is a landholding anyway?



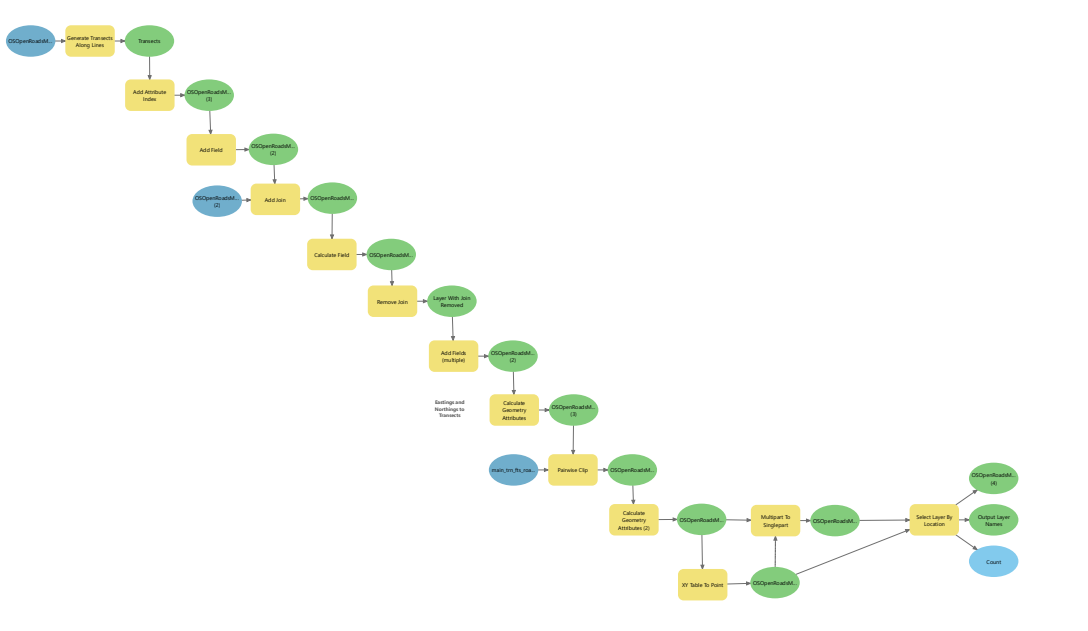
Population – Who is in scope?



Concentration – how might this be quantified?



Tenure – a complex picture...



A processing pipeline (infrastructure)

“This is amazing Dave, thank you. Just Brilliant.”

Andy Proudfoot – Land Reform Bill Team Lead (responding to work on quantifying infrastructure widths – May 2025).

“The work that James Hutton Institute have done to support the Land Reform Bill as part of this SRP has been invaluable, and has been referenced in impact assessments, policy memorandums, and to inform policy. Keith and Dave have made a real effort to understand the policy objectives of the Bill and to present research outputs in a way that allows for policy use.”

Nye Todd – Land Reform Bill Team (on the impact of the research – September 2025).

Acknowledgements

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² <https://whoownsscotland.org.uk/>



Scotland’s Land Reform
Futures project website
<https://land-reform-futures.hutton.ac.uk/>