

Institution: University of Glasgow (UofG)		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 13 Architecture, Built Environment and Planning		
Title of case study: Tackling urban land vacancy through urban land reform		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2005–2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): (1) David Adams	Role(s) (e.g. job title): (1) Ian Mactaggart Professor of Property and Urban Studies; Emeritus Professor in Urban Studies	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: (1) 2004–2019; 2019–onwards
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014–2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Almost 11,000 hectares of urban land in Scotland are vacant or derelict, of which 47% has remained in that condition for almost 20 years. This legacy is disproportionately concentrated in deprived areas and linked to debilitating social issues, such as poor health and unemployment. From 2014 onwards, Adams' research—which highlights the extent to which urban land vacancy obstructs sustainable economic growth—has: (i) played a pivotal role in informing national policy debate. Through his role as a government advisor, the research has: (ii) driven policy and key legislative proposals that aim to disrupt urban land vacancy and facilitate social regeneration; (iii) informed plans to operationalise the most developed of these proposals, 'Compulsory Sale Orders', which the Scottish Government has committed to bring forward for legislation in 2021.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>2.1. Overview</p> <p>Professor David Adams has spent over 30 years researching the causes and consequences of urban land vacancy. Since coming to the UofG in 2004, his work has focused on understanding hardcore vacancy (as outlined in section 2.2 below); evaluating policy responses (as outlined in section 2.3 below); and proposing innovative solutions (as outlined in section 2.4 below). While researchers from other institutions have been involved in specific studies over the years (as noted in section 3 below), Adams has worked consistently on this body of research over several decades, taking forward the core thinking and developing it into policy-relevant proposals.</p> <p>2.2. Identifying hardcore vacancy</p> <p>Hardcore or semi-permanent vacancy is generally understood as land which has been vacant or derelict for more than nine years. Adams has explored hardcore vacancy at the site-specific, city-wide and national levels. At the site-specific level, his Nottingham research examines how 11 hectares of prime land close to the city centre have remained vacant for over 25 years [3.6]. At a city-wide level, he revisited 80 large sites in 4 British cities originally surveyed in 1995, and found that only 54% had been redeveloped by 2011 [3.3]. At a national level, his detailed analysis of official Scottish statistics shows little change in the overall scale of vacancy and dereliction in Scotland since the late 1990s [3.2, 3.4, 3.5]. For example, over 40% of the 11,000 hectares of vacant and derelict land officially recorded in 2014 had been in that same condition for at least 23 years. By 2020, this proportion had worsened to 47% of Scotland's vacant and derelict land being in that condition for almost 20 years.</p> <p>2.3. Evaluating policy responses</p> <p>Adams' research is critical of established policy responses, including over-reliance on property-led urban regeneration [3.6], and on only trying to resolve planning, physical and infrastructure constraints [3.2]. He has argued that hardcore vacancy needs to be understood in the context of both market and policy failure [3.4, 3.5, 3.7]. This requires an understanding of land markets as social constructs, shaped by the behaviour of key actors such as landowners, developers, planners and valuers [3.5]. This is exemplified by Adams' work on North Glasgow [3.7], which contains almost 120 hectares of vacant and derelict land within a relatively small area. This work examines the role of valuers as key market-makers, deploying calculative practices that are not just highly problematic <i>per se</i>, but which may serve to delay or deter the prospects of regenerating urban land. Internationally, Adams has also evaluated radical policy responses to</p>		

land market failure in Hong Kong, where an institutionally-based approach has been pioneered [3.1]. A key finding from Hong Kong is that over-complex and demanding legislation results in low usage of the policy instruments intended to bring vacant land into productive use.

2.4. Proposing innovative solutions

Adams' research finds that urban land reform can play a critical role in tackling hardcore vacancy by rebalancing property rights and resolving land market failure [3.4, 3.5, 3.7]. Based upon these findings, Adams has proposed two entirely new solutions—'Compulsory Sale Orders' and 'Majority Land Assembly'—as well as updating his earlier proposal for 'Urban Partnership Zones'. Of these proposals, work on Compulsory Sale Orders (CSOs) has been developed most fully [3.4, 3.5], including testing the potential reaction of senior valuers as key market-makers [3.7].

In the UK, local authorities cannot easily bring about positive change on vacant and derelict land, unless it is in their ownership. In principle, Compulsory Purchase Orders could be used to achieve this. However, as Adams' earlier research showed, local authorities are reluctant to initiate Compulsory Purchase Order action for administrative, financial and legal reasons. Adams' proposed CSOs have the potential to provide a more direct and simpler solution to owner neglect of vacant and derelict land, especially where local authorities do not wish to be over-prescriptive on the precise form of preferred re-use or redevelopment. The introduction of CSOs will enable land that has been vacant for an undue period of time to be sold by public auction, thus preventing landowners with unrealistic price expectations from keeping land vacant indefinitely, and so making development more viable.

3. References to the research

3.1. Hastings, E. M. and Adams, D. (2005) [Facilitating urban renewal – Changing institutional arrangements and land assembly in Hong Kong](#). *Property Management*, 23(2), pp. 110-121. (doi: [10.1108/02637470510589986](#))

3.2. Adams, D., De Sousa, C. and Tiesdell, S. (2010) [Brownfield development: A comparison of North American and British approaches](#). *Urban Studies*, 47(1), pp. 75-104. (doi:[10.1177/0042098009346868](#))

3.3. Adams, D., Disberry, A., and Hutchison, N. (2012) [Whatever happened to brownfield land? Town and Country Planning](#), Oct, pp. 433-437. ISSN: 0040-9960 [available on request from HEI]

3.4. Adams, D. (2013) [The Potential for Urban Land Reform in Scotland](#). Paper presented to AESOP-ACSP Joint Congress, Dublin, Ireland, 15-19 Jul 2013.

3.5. Adams, D. (2017) [Tackling hardcore vacancy through compulsory sale orders](#). In: Henneberry, J. (ed.) *Transience and Permanence in Urban Development*. Series: Real estate issues (Oxford, England). John Wiley & Sons: Hoboken, NJ, pp. 215-229. ISBN 9781119055655 [available on request from HEI]

3.6. Adams, D., Disberry, A., and Hutchison, N. (2017) [Still vacant after all these years – evaluating the efficiency of property-led urban regeneration](#). *Local Economy*, 32(6), pp. 505-524. (doi:[10.1177/0269094217729129](#))

3.7. Adams, D. and Tolson, S. (2019) [Valuation in the dark: Constructing perceptions of normality in failing markets](#). *Town Planning Review*, 90(4), pp. 383-406. (doi:[10.3828/tpr.2019.26](#))

Quality of the research: Outputs [3.1, 3.2, 3.6] and [3.7] are all published in well-established and esteemed international journals where submissions are subject to double-blind peer review. Item [3.2] was one of the UoA's submitted outputs to REF2014 in which no output was rated as less than 2*. Output [3.5] was peer reviewed by the editor and another contributor to the volume.

4. Details of the impact

Through his role as a government advisor (as outlined in section 4.1 below), Adams' innovative land reform proposals have driven policy and proposed legislation by informing key actors and stakeholders in order to build national consensus (as outlined in section 4.2 below); through solicited professional advice used by a coalition of third-sector organisations to lobby the Scottish Government (as outlined in section 4.3 below); and through the development of detailed proposals to operationalise Compulsory Sale Orders (CSOs) as a policy instrument (as outlined in section 4.4 below).

4.1. Pathway to impact

Based upon his body of research, the Scottish Government invited Adams to serve as an advisor to its newly-formed Land Reform Review Group (LRRG) in 2012. Adams' advice to the LRRG set out the case for three radical responses to Scotland's urban land problems: legislation to introduce a 'Community Right of Sale', 'Majority Land Assembly' and 'Urban Partnership Zones'. The LRRG published its final report in May 2014, with all three of Adams' research-based proposals included as recommendations to the Scottish Government, but with that for a 'Community Right of Sale' rebranded as a 'Compulsory Sale Order' (confirmed by report [5A]).

4.2. Informing national policy debate

Adams' research has played a pivotal role in building consensus for urban land reform proposals in Scotland. Following his work for the LRRG, he was appointed as an external member of the Scottish Government Sounding Board (2015), which consulted with key stakeholders on the recommendations made by the LRRG; including the three originally proposed by Adams (confirmed by invitation and associated paper [5B]). Subsequently, Adams made a series of presentations to enhance professional knowledge on the LRRG proposals. As a result of this activity, Adams was invited by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Scotland to help respond to the LRRG report [5A] by serving on its own Land Reform Working Group (confirmed by invitation [5C]). The Chair of RICS Scotland wrote: *"it is important that RICS becomes actively involved on a cross-faculty basis in making representations and engaging on land reform with Government [...] I believe [the land reform agenda] has the potential to be one of the most significant pieces of legislation impacting on Chartered Surveyors in recent times."*

In August 2014, Adams wrote seven short [briefing papers](#) on urban land reform, which were published online by Policy Scotland (the UofG's policy-orientated Knowledge Exchange Centre). These briefing papers were used as a platform to engage in sustained media activity. Adams contributed to, or was quoted in, over 30 media articles within the REF period (e.g. in [The Scotsman](#), [The Times](#) and [The Herald](#)) in order to build public support for his research-based proposals. In response to *The Herald* article (above), one reader commented: *"I shall email FM [First Minister] Nicola Sturgeon and my local MSP a copy of Professor Adams' excellent summary [...] If more of us take this action and back his views, increased pressure on all MSPs might lead to better action on further proposals for urban land reform."* (confirmed by collated media activity [5D]).

Adams' extensive engagement activity has also inspired leading land reform campaigners in Scotland. For example, in 2014 Green MSP and land reform campaigner Andy Wightman wrote a supportive article [5E] on his website linking directly to Adams' research-based briefing papers. The research also informed key opinion leaders, such as Architect A, who chaired the Scottish Government's National Review of Town Centres. Having heard Adams speak in 2014, Architect A subsequently promoted the value of CSOs to stakeholders from across the housing sector, through his membership of the Scottish Government's Joint Housing Delivery Group (confirmed by statement [5F]). He wrote: *"I have since supported and encouraged [Adams'] advocacy of Compulsory Sale Orders, as providing a public lever that uses the market to advance development on stalled or landbanked sites, providing public authorities with a powerful new lever for regeneration."*

4.3. Informing urban land reform policy and proposed legislation

Building upon the support of key national stakeholders, Adams has drawn upon his research to drive land reform lobbying, policy and proposed legislation in Scotland. In August 2015, he was invited by Community Land Scotland to give advice on CSOs, which at that stage had yet to be

agreed in principle by the Scottish Government. Subsequently, Community Land Scotland put together a coalition of third-sector organisations to lobby the Scottish Parliament's Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee to include CSOs in the [Land Reform \(Scotland\) Bill](#) (introduced in late 2015). Adams was closely involved in advising this coalition, for instance, in drafting written briefings for Sarah Boyack MSP, who put down amendments to the Bill at Stages 2 and 3 to introduce CSOs (confirmed by Boyack's amendments and an email from the former Policy Director of Community Land Scotland [5G]).

Boyack's amendments were withdrawn at the Stage 3 debate of the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill on the promise of government action. Speaking on behalf of the Scottish Government, Paul Wheelhouse MSP said: *"I can confirm that, subject to the outcome of the election, Scottish ministers will look to include provision for Compulsory Sale Orders in the legislative programme for the next session Parliament, once all the necessary preparatory work—including legal and practical issues—has been considered and resolved"* (confirmed by report [5H]). Proposals to introduce CSOs were subsequently included in the [SNP Manifesto](#) (p.27) and the [Labour Manifesto](#) (p.42) for the 2016 Scottish Parliamentary elections. The former Policy Director of Community Land Scotland wrote: *"Prof. Adams' detailed and thorough research enabled a convincing case to be made, and the Scottish Government gave a commitment to so legislate at a suitable and early opportunity"* (statement [5G]).

In principle, CSOs can apply to empty property as well as to vacant and derelict land. Notably, in November 2019, the Local Government and Communities Committee Report on Empty Homes in Scotland maintained the pressure on the Scottish Government by stating that: *"We urge the Scottish Government to introduce Compulsory Sales Orders as a complementary power for local authorities to use in the quest to solving empty home problems in their area"* (confirmed by report [5I]). This development is particularly significant, as between March 2017 and March 2018, there were almost 35,000 homelessness applications recorded in Scotland, while at the same time there were over 37,000 long-term empty homes.

4.4. informing the development of detailed proposals to implement CSOs

In 2016, Adams was appointed by the Scottish Government as one of Scotland's five new Land Commissioners, charged with driving forward land reform. In 2018, the [Scottish Land Commission](#) began working with the Scottish Government and other interested stakeholders to develop detailed proposals on how a new CSO mechanism will work in practice. Adams' chaired the Expert Advisory Group that was convened to guide this process, and his research was directly cited in the Scottish Land Commission's proposal, which was submitted to the Scottish Government in August 2018 (confirmed by proposal [5J]).

In October 2019, the Head of Regeneration at the Scottish Government confirmed that the government intends to introduce the new CSO power for local authorities, and will bring forward a package of proposals for the next administration to consider legislation following the 2021 Scottish Parliamentary elections. This commitment was reiterated by the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning, Kevin Stewart MSP, on 7 January 2020, when he said: *"given Brexit and the pressures on the legislative programme, there is very little parliamentary time to bring legislation forward [...] I remain committed to introducing Compulsory Sale Orders for local authorities [...] Those proposals will be ready for the next Administration to consider legislating on early in the next parliamentary session"* (confirmed by an email from the Head of Regeneration and the Official Parliament Report [5K]).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[5A] [Final Report from the Land Reform Review Group](#) (May 2014) (Adams' contribution is listed in Annex 2; output [3.4] is directly cited on p.120) [PDF available].

[5B] Collated evidence: (i) Invitation to join the Scottish Government Sounding Board (2014-15); (ii) associated paper; (iii) the briefing papers that Adams prepared for the group, also available on the [Scottish Government website](#) [PDFs available].

[5C] Invitation to join RICS Scotland Land Reform Working Group [PDF available].

[5D] Collated media articles (Aug 2013 – July 2020) (including quote from reader and Adams' research-based briefing papers) [PDFs available].

[5E] Land Matters – The Blog and Website of Andy Wightman (August 2015) [PDF available].

[5F] Statement from leading Scottish Architect ('Architect A') (Oct 2019) **[PDF available]**.

[5G] Collated evidence: (i) Boyack's amendments; (ii) Statement from the former Policy Director for Community Land Scotland (Sept 2019) **[PDFs available]**.

[5H] [Stage 3 Debate Official Report](#) (March 2016) (Paul Wheelhouse quote after section 64 on p.154 of the report) **[PDF available]**.

[5I] Local Government and Communities Committee Report on Empty Homes in Scotland (Nov 2019) (quote from Executive Summary p.2) **[PDF available]**.

[5J] [Compulsory Sales Orders: A Proposal from the Scottish Land Commission](#) (August 2018); (Adams' research is directly cited on p.1) **[PDF available]**.

[5K] Collated evidence (i): Email from the Head of Regeneration at the Scottish Government; (ii) Meeting of the Parliament Official Report Session 5 (January 2020) (Kevin Stewart's quote on p.32) **[PDFs available]**.