

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ENABLING HUB FOR COMMUNITY LAND OWNERSHIP

The Community Ownership Hub: Glasgow and Clyde Valley is an action research project by Community Land Scotland.

Through the Community Ownership Hub, we aim to accelerate community ownership in Glasgow and the Clyde Valley. While some community groups here have had great success in their buy outs, many more groups aspire to own land and buildings, and the process is more difficult than it should be.

HOW IT WORKS

Through the Hub we support community groups who are in the process of buying land or buildings, with a focus on those buying from private landowners. We learn from our work with community groups, researching and advocating for the changes needed to improve community land ownership.

The Hub targets the local authority areas within the Glasgow City Region, specifically Glasgow, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire, East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire. The project launched in March 2021, and we intend to run for three operational years (2021/2022, 2022/2023, 2023/2024).

The project team is two staff, a development officer working primarily to support groups and promote community ownership, and a manager focusing on action research and strategic engagement. Both staff are part of the wider Community Land Scotland staff team.

The project also has funding for technical support to provide expertise to community groups.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The project objectives were identified with an advisory panel. The objectives are:

- 1** Raise profile, and quality of discussion, of urban community ownership and land reform
- 2** Enhanced support for groups, with a focus on early-stage groups
- 3** Progressing community ownership of privately held Vacant and Derelict Land
- 4** Planning innovations to support community ownership
- 5** Addressing inequality and building inclusion

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SUPPORTING COMMUNITY GROUPS – KEY NUMBERS

64 groups have been in contact. Of these groups 46 are early stage, and 35 groups have had ongoing support, meaning three or more contacts with us.

Groups have been interested in land owned by a range of types of owners, reflecting groups' interest in sites of importance to them, not by type of owner. The majority of groups getting in touch are interested in some type of privately owned land.

We have had consistent interest from groups from more resource deprived areas. 42 out of 64 groups that have contacted us are from the 20% most deprived areas (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation). This demonstrates strong interest in community ownership in areas with less resources.

Community groups have been most interested in buying greenspace projects of any type (including community gardens, parks, woodlands, and nature conservation). The second most popular type of project is a community centre.

We collaborate with a range of organisations, including those providing support on other aspects of community ownership. We've received 25 referrals and made 38 referrals; we provide "warm handovers" in all cases, and work collaboratively.

EARLY OUTCOMES

We are tracking our progress with a monitoring and evaluation strategy and are making good progress on all our objectives. This project will continue for two more years. The project objectives will remain the same and will continue to be assessed annually.

Key research outcomes from our first year are below. First we summarise key evidence, and then provide emerging policy and research recommendations. We are sharing our outcomes on an ongoing basis. To put it simply-- waiting to share our learning until this project is complete is too long to wait! The outcomes will be refined as the project progresses, we welcome questions and collaborations.

EVIDENCE OUTCOMES

1. There is a high level of interest in community land ownership in Clyde Valley, particularly in Glasgow. This includes a lot of interest from those at the earliest stages of exploring what a community buyout could be.
2. There is strong interest in community land ownership in more deprived areas.
3. There is interest in buying land and buildings owned by all types of landowners, with notable interest those owned privately (including that held by Councils' Arms Length External Organisations).
4. There is a growing group of post-acquisition urban community landowners who are currently implementing their plans, such as for renovation or multi-staged development.
5. There is a growing group of community groups leasing (or interested in leasing) land and buildings from public bodies, who are supported by other organisations which specialise in this.

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6. We have worked with a small but growing number of groups who focus on supporting ethnic minority communities. These groups report difficulties in obtaining land and buildings to use or own. There is evidence of exclusion and prejudice which is of significant concern.
7. Community groups have been especially interested in greenspace projects.
8. Community groups have been interested in vacant and derelict land and buildings, but these are seldom on the official vacant and derelict land register.
9. There are notable challenges in accessing and interpreting information on land ownership and use. City centre areas can be marked by fragmented land ownership patterns, and rural or suburban areas can be under development pressure leading to complicated land ownership and use information. Lack of freely available high-quality information is a particular challenge.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS THUS FAR

Our work has identified the following priorities for policy change, further research and funding. Headline priorities are set out below and are explained in the report. These are initial priorities, provided to shape policy and build consensus on how we can grasp the potential of community ownership across the Clyde Valley.

1. Build interest into buy outs

The strong interest in community ownership needs strategic and consistent support to translate into purchases of land and buildings.

Building support is not just providing more direct support or funding but also delivering political and policy support which embraces the potential of urban community land ownership.

2. Not another pilot: next steps in community-led resolution of Vacant and Derelict Land

There have been a number of high-profile Vacant and Derelict Land (VDL) projects in recent years, including the Scottish Land Commission's Task Force. Now is the time for strategic thinking on next steps, and this needs to include a particular focus on community experiences.

The recommendations of the VDL Task Force should be implemented urgently, including particularly the reform of the VDL register and a need to provide accurate and transparent data on site ownership and use.

3. Innovative support for greenspace projects

There is significant interest in greenspace projects of all kinds, illustrating the need for local urban greenspaces and appetite for community-led approaches to climate change projects. Ways to support this interest need to be prioritised. Developing revenue funding options for community owned urban greenspace could make a significant difference.

4. Establish clearer ownership routes from temporary management

We appreciate that leases and management agreements offer the ability for community groups to build capacity and trial approaches. However, community groups can suffer from

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lack of control about leasing and other temporary arrangements, and there can be difficulties delivering long term projects due to the nature of temporary agreements. Additional research on community experiences of temporary asset management and implications for land reform priorities, would be timely and beneficial. Generally, there is a need to create a clearer path from lease to ownership, for those groups who want to proceed to ownership.

5. Establish a coherent policy framework for communities to be proactive over land

Scottish communities benefit from a range of policy and legislative tools to implement their vision over land in the public interest, such as Community Rights to Buy, and Local Place Plans. These tools are complex from community perspectives, and would benefit from being rationalised into a coherent framework.

6. Develop the land pillar of Community Wealth Building

The Scottish Government has adopted Community Wealth Building policy. Scotland's land reform process and community ownership model is an excellent foundation to build community wealth. However, more is needed to centre land in the Community Wealth Building approaches to economic development. Pilot projects to scale up socially productive uses of land, particularly privately owned land, would be a good next step.

7. Inclusion review

Given the levels of interest in community ownership in locations with less resources, the inclusivity implications of current community land supports need to be reviewed, such as requirements for match funding and limitations on revenue funding by the Scottish Land Fund. Existing experiences of buy outs in resource-deprived areas should be researched to understand how community ownership support could be more inclusive.

Due to the level of challenge we have evidenced from groups which focus on inclusion and diversity (e.g. immigration-focused), research should be prioritised on experiences of those already significantly disadvantaged in terms of place, such as due to the practicalities of immigration or suffering from long term and systematic exclusion from land assets.

8. Review Land Fund Cap

The £1 million limit on Scottish Land Fund awards should be reviewed, and the Land Commission's forthcoming research on community ownership funding approaches will need to be acted on to support urban community land acquisitions at current market prices.

9. Introduce Land Reform Act

A new land reform act is urgently needed to address challenges in urban community ownership, including:

- Improved, integrated and accessible land information.
- Review and amendment of Community Rights to Buy and the Community Asset Transfer Scheme to ensure they are fit for purpose.
- A public interest test on land transactions and uses which harm communities due to their size, scale (such as due to local monopolies), and duration, such as long term vacant and derelict land.