



SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION
COIMISEAN FEARAINN NA H-ALBA

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING AND LAND

How we own, manage and use our land is key to building community wealth and strengthening local economies. The ways we own and use land influence many parts of our everyday lives – from the price and availability of housing, access to greenspace, the effects of derelict sites on our communities, our ability to take climate action, or simply the means and confidence for people to build businesses and communities.

Land has an important role to play in building a wellbeing economy that promotes inclusive economic growth, reduces inequality, supports climate action and a just transition, and empowers people and communities to bring about positive changes. How we collectively own and use land is key to achieving this fundamental economic transformation, and a community wealth building (CWB) approach aligned with the principles of the [Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement](#) offers a helpful framework for how to put this into practice.

This guidance sets out actions that can be taken in the short and long term to support an inclusive, sustainable, and empowered local economy, where land is used and managed productively and in the public interest.

It is informed and underpinned by the Scottish Government's Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement, and based on the shared values and principles below.

Shared values and principles

- A place-based approach
- Collaboration and collective action
- Socially just use of land
- Tackling inequalities
- Balanced decision-making
- Flexibility to take a local approach



FOREWORD

Scotland needs a strong future economy where secure and well-paid jobs and thriving businesses help drive a reduction in poverty and inequalities. The Scottish Government's new [National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#) contains bold and ambitious actions to deliver economic prosperity for all Scotland's people and places. With fair work and a just transition at its heart, the strategy builds on the [Covid Recovery Strategy](#) and will support progress towards net zero, help restore the natural environment, stimulate innovation and create jobs. Our vision for Scotland in 2032 is a wellbeing economy: thriving across economic, social and environmental dimensions.

Community Wealth Building (CWB) builds upon Scotland's tradition of progressive policy. It enables anchor organisations with strong ties to localities to see themselves as economic agents, work with business and recognise the potential of the levers at their disposal under each of the CWB pillars: spend, workforce, land and property, finance and inclusive ownership – using these to enhance decision making and have greater influence over the local economy in which they operate.

The desire for Scotland's economy to be more prosperous, productive and equitable sits right at the heart of our ambitions for Community Wealth Building, which is why I welcome the launch of the Scottish Land Commission's Community Wealth Building guide.

Land has an important role to play in building a wellbeing economy that promotes inclusive economic growth, reduces inequality, supports climate action and a just transition and empowers people and communities to bring about positive change. This guide will be a vital, practical addition to the implementation and embedding of the Community Wealth Building approach in Scotland.



Tom Arthur MSP
*Minister for Public Finance,
Planning and Community Wealth*



Who is this for?

This guidance provides information for public bodies that own, manage, use, and influence the use of land and buildings in Scotland.

Public bodies play a key role in a local area as anchor institutions because they have a substantial impact on the local economy through their spending, investment, employment, and use of land and buildings.

Different aspects of land and buildings can be managed by staff from different parts of the organisation. It is important that all relevant staff are engaged and involved in taking forward the actions set out in this guidance.



What is Community Wealth Building?

Community wealth building (CWB) is a people-centred approach to local economic development, which redirects wealth back into the local economy, and places control and benefits of assets and resources into the hands of local people. It supports democratic and collective ownership of assets and of the local economy, taking a whole place collaborative approach. It is based on [five core principles](#):

- **Spending** – Maximising community benefits through procurement and commissioning, developing good enterprises, fair work and shorter supply chains
- **Inclusive Ownership** – Developing more local and social enterprises which generate community wealth, including social enterprises, employee-owned firms, and co-ops
- **Workforce** – Increasing fair work and developing local labour markets that support the wellbeing of communities
- **Finance** – Ensuring that flows of investment and financial institutions work for local people, communities, and businesses
- **Land and Property** – Growing the social, ecological, financial and economic value that local communities gain from land and property assets.

This guidance addresses the **Land and Property** principle and sets out actions that can be taken by staff to manage land and buildings in a positive and proactive way that supports an inclusive wellbeing economy, while empowering communities and meeting community aspirations, and contributing to climate aspirations.

We recognise that many positive actions are already being taken by anchor institutions and this guidance is intended to inform and support new and existing strategies and policies, and work alongside existing activity, to contribute to wellbeing and developing more sustainable and resilient places. [The diagram on the following page illustrates where the guidance sits alongside current frameworks.](#)

National Outcomes

National land and place strategies and frameworks



Local strategies and frameworks



What are Land Rights and Responsibilities?

Land rights and responsibilities are about owning, managing, and using land in a fair way that benefits everyone. The [Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement](#) (LRRS) was published in 2017 by Scottish Government and sets out a vision and principles for land use, management, and ownership in Scotland that should underpin every decision made about land.

The LRRS adopts a human rights approach to balancing land rights with responsibilities and signals a determination to lead the way in ensuring that Scotland's urban and rural land contributes to inclusive and sustainable economic growth and to social justice. The statement applies to all urban and rural land, buildings and other infrastructure in Scotland, and it is equally relevant to all the people and communities of Scotland, whether land owner, land manager, tenant or land user.

This guidance explains how the vision and principles set out in the statement can be applied in practice to realise the Land and Property pillar of community wealth building, growing the social, ecological, financial and economic value that local communities gain from land and property assets.

Actions

The actions set out below are guidelines for good practice. They set out the measures and activities that can be taken to support a community wealth building approach to managing land and buildings.

There are six headline areas for action:

- Supporting net zero ambitions and sustainable development – Taking and implementing decisions, use and management in ways that promote good stewardship
- Positive management of land and assets – Proactively managing your estate
- Productive re-use of land and buildings – Addressing vacant and derelict land
- Collaboration and partnership – Engaging with your community and involving others in decisions about land and buildings
- Supporting economic growth and community aspirations – Promoting and enabling diversified ownership and management of land and buildings, including community ownership
- Sharing information – Being open and transparent about land and buildings and about decision-making processes and plans.

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Supporting net zero aspirations and sustainable development – Taking and implementing decisions, use and management in ways that promote good stewardship

Scotland's land and its landscapes, both urban and rural, are important to our sense of identity and to our individual and social wellbeing. The way land is used can make a significant contribution to Scotland's economy and provide public benefit, including through producing food, providing housing and access to greenspace, tackling climate change, creating employment opportunities, or contributing to nature conservation and environmental management.

Good stewardship and high standards of land management, focused on sustainable development, support and enhance these activities. Decisions made with a focus on good stewardship are made with consideration for the long-term needs and wellbeing of local communities and places. This approach complements existing legislative and good practice requirements for good stewardship.

Addressing the global climate emergency and meeting our net zero targets requires immediate and sustained action which will require significant land use change. This needs to be taken forward in a socially just and responsible way that delivers benefits for everyone.

Actions for Good Practice:

- a. Ensure that processes for making decisions about the use and management of land and buildings support productive use of land and the principle of good stewardship, considering economic, social, and environmental impacts and benefits. This could include reviewing the capacity of land to sustain the environmental, social and economic benefits it provides, assessing the delivery of shared public benefits, and identifying cost-effective, preventative action that can be taken to avoid environmental damage.
- b. Recognise where land has natural capital value and identify ways to enhance and respect this natural capital in a way that has a positive impact on net zero ambitions, climate action, and biodiversity.
- c. Identify and take actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with land use and review the likely impact of management practices and changes to management on biodiversity.
- d. Where land is highly suitable for a primary use (for example: food production, flood management, water catchment management, and carbon storage), take account of this value when making decisions. Take account of the impact of potential decisions on the local environment and communities.
- e. When developing land or buildings, identify opportunities to create, maintain, and protect publicly accessible green spaces, especially in areas where people live.



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Positive management of land and assets – Proactively managing your estate

Positive long-term and strategic land planning which considers and contributes to broader sustainable development and delivery of public benefit is an important part of managing Scotland's land for the future. Proactive estate management helps to ensure we are making the most of our land and building assets, using these finite and valuable resources for public benefit.

Taking a proactive approach can make it easier to plan and prioritise resources, identify opportunities to make better use of land and buildings, prevent vacant and derelict land, and ensure assets are used to add value to and meet the needs of the organisation and the wider community.

The actions set out in this section link to the spending and finance pillars of community wealth building. There are opportunities to consider how to support local spending and the use of local materials, as well as sustainable construction practices.

Actions for Good Practice:

- a. Identify the social, ecological, financial and economic benefits delivered by the land and buildings you own. Consider whether there are opportunities to work with others to make more productive use of assets and to deliver greater benefits, including through community ownership.
- b. Regularly assess whether land and buildings are being well-maintained and used in ways that support sustainable development. Identify any opportunities and barriers to more sustainable use and take action to address these.
- c. Ensure that your estate management strategies identify land and buildings at risk of becoming surplus to requirements. Identify any risks and opportunities associated with this, create action plans for at risk assets, and take steps to reduce the likelihood that they will become problematic.

- d. When developing land or buildings, consider how to support local spending and the use of local materials and contractors through procurement processes.
- e. Where property has become vacant, put a plan in place to ensure that the site or property is maintained in a reasonable condition whilst the land or buildings are awaiting re-use or redevelopment.
- f. When there are long-term plans for land and buildings that will take time to come to fruition, identify suitable interim uses including through leasing, partnership working or other collaborative working arrangements. When putting these in place, be clear with other parties about timeframes and expectations for the end of the arrangements.
- g. When land or buildings are causing harm to the surrounding community due to their physical condition, work with stakeholders – including the owner of the land or building and local community organisations – to identify and assess options for restoring them to economically, socially, or environmentally productive use.

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Productive re-use of land and buildings – Addressing vacant and derelict land

Taking a whole-place collaborative approach that considers how to bring vacant and derelict sites back into use and promotes the re-use of land can help us to overcome barriers for development and identify opportunities that meet a wide range of needs.

Land is a finite resource. If more vacant and derelict sites were brought back into productive use, they could help us to tackle climate change, improve health and wellbeing, create more resilient communities, and rebuild our economy in a way that helps everyone achieve their full potential. Anchor institutions, the planning system, and place-based partnerships play a key role in coordinating action and investment to reuse vacant and derelict land and redundant buildings.

BEFORE



AFTER



Actions for Good Practice:

- a. The reuse of vacant and derelict land and redundant buildings should be included in Local Development Plans as a priority area for action. Chief Planning Officers or another suitable person should take on responsibility for coordinating and leading on vacant and derelict land at a local level and be resourced to do so.
- b. Develop a vacant and derelict land (VDL) strategy with key stakeholders for tackling vacant and derelict land and prioritising the reuse of land. The strategy should identify the approach to prioritising sites for reuse, giving weighting to the wider benefits of land reuse, and including community needs and aspirations.
- c. Publicly owned sites identified by communities as causing harm, even where they are smaller than 0.1Ha, should be identified for action in the VDL strategy.
- d. When undertaking major capital investment projects, review project site boundaries to identify opportunities to incorporate persistently problematic vacant and derelict sites into the project.
- e. When prioritising land and buildings for investment, assess the impact on communities of vacant and derelict land in their areas and consider the wider benefits that can be delivered through the reuse of land.
- f. Carry out due diligence on disposal of property to ensure it will be productively reused, and, if necessary, attach appropriate conditions to ensure future owners maintain the asset in an acceptable state of repair.

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Engaging with your community and involving others in decisions about land and buildings

Community engagement helps land owners and communities to build positive relationships and to work together for the benefit of local areas. It provides an opportunity for proposals to be explained and understood, and for valuable input and feedback to be provided by the community which can help with identifying new ideas and opportunities for innovation. Effective community engagement and community involvement in decision-making also ensures that projects taken forward meet community needs and aspirations, increasing local support for developments and leading to stronger and more sustainable projects.

Collaboration with stakeholders and between anchor institutions aligns with the Place Principle and is a key element of successful community wealth building, adding value and creating mutual benefits. Anchor institutions can collectively take a 'commons' approach to public land and assets for the benefit of local economies, community wellbeing, and the environment. Working together offers the chance to define shared objectives and priorities, share information and data that can help decision-making, identify and understand opportunities, share knowledge and skills, and align resources.

Actions for Good Practice:

- a. Ensure that community engagement practices across your organisation meet the standards set out in the [Scottish Government Guidance on Engaging Communities in Relation to Land](#) and the [National Standards for Community Engagement](#).
- b. Work with communities and local businesses to create proactive engagement plans setting out agreed expectations on what, how and when the community will be engaged on decisions about land and buildings.
- c. Explore options to use governance structures which support empowerment, engagement, and democratic involvement in the management of land and buildings.

- d. Make information about planned changes to how land and buildings are used or managed available to those who might be affected at a time when there is still an opportunity to influence the decisions being made.
- e. Share information about proposed disposals of land and buildings with the local community using a range of communication channels. Give communities a reasonable opportunity to share their views or indicate interest in leasing or buying assets.
- f. Best efforts should be made to accommodate reasonably made and proportionate requests for information, or for discussions about ideas or issues, about publicly owned land or buildings. This should be done within a reasonable timeframe.
- g. Communities, other anchor institutions, and private owners and managers of land should be encouraged to take part in planning processes and consultations about land, either through direct involvement, through local groups, or through membership organisations.
- h. Share feedback on how views shared by the community during engagement processes, including those set out in Local Place Plans, have been taken into account in the decision-making process and the impact these have had on decisions made.



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Supporting economic growth and community aspirations – Promoting and enabling diversified ownership and management of land and buildings, including community ownership

More inclusive and diverse ownership and management of assets enables more of the wealth generated by those assets to be retained locally, strengthening the local economy and creating more sustainable places.

A wide and diverse availability of land and buildings allows businesses, organisations, individuals, and communities to pursue projects of all scales and purposes. Access to land can provide a range of benefits, including supporting sustainable local economic development, providing spaces for social and amenity activities, building community wealth and ensuring communities have a greater stake in the local economy, and improving access to green spaces.

Community ownership and use of land and buildings can support wellbeing and resilience by giving local people the opportunity to identify and respond to their own needs and the chance to benefit from income generated. It can offer communities the chance to provide local housing, business opportunities, community facilities, recreation facilities, greenspace and other facilities and services that benefit local people.

Actions for Good Practice:

- a. Proactively support communities to identify where access to land and buildings could meet their needs and aspirations, through engagement, co-production, or democratic participation.
- b. When deciding to develop, purchase, transfer or lease land or buildings, ensure decision-making processes take into account the wider benefits that could be delivered. These benefits could be social, ecological, financial or economic. Consideration should be given to long-term benefits that could outweigh the value of short-term gains.
- c. Identify opportunities to work with others to deliver greater community benefits when developing land and buildings. These could include opportunities to meet

identified community needs, to provide training and employment, or to support local businesses and communities. Incorporate these into your project plans and your procurement processes.

- d. Ensure that your organisation, if required, is meeting the requirements set out in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and that you have the appropriate policies and process in place to support these. These should be shared online so that communities are aware of them.
- e. Identify and support suitable opportunities for communities to take ownership of or be involved in the management of publicly owned assets, considering the most appropriate route to ownership or management, whether that is through negotiated agreement or using participation requests or Community Asset Transfer processes.
- f. When communities are interested in owning, leasing, or using land or property, give them sufficient time to develop their projects and secure funding. The amount of time required will be determined on an individual case basis but it should be clearly agreed between both parties.
- g. Ensure decision-making processes are open and transparent. When communicating a decision about the use, sale, or lease of land or buildings, provide clear reasons for the decision and let applicants know about any appeals processes or alternative opportunities.
- h. Subject to the agreement of both parties, public bodies and community organisations should review the different options for valuation and using a joint valuation process where appropriate. When using a joint valuation process, costs should be split between both parties if possible.
- i. When using any burdens, lease conditions, title conditions, or clawback arrangements ensure they are appropriate and proportionate and avoid those that will have an adverse impact on the viability or sustainability of businesses, community projects or other activities.



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Sharing information – Being open and transparent about land and buildings and about decision-making processes and plans

Sharing information about land ownership, use, and management can empower people, giving them the opportunity to understand more about the land around them and enabling more people to get involved in engagement and decision-making processes.

As anchor institutions, sharing information about your land and buildings can also help you to improve your public profile and relationships with the community and other stakeholders, understand local needs and priorities, and identify options for lease and sale of land and opportunities for innovation and collaboration.

Actions for Good Practice:

- a. Publish details about land and buildings you own and lease on your website, in line with requirements in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. This information should be kept up-to-date and should ideally be map-based.
- b. Publish contact details for named contacts for land and buildings. The information should be in line with the information that will be detailed in the Land Register and Register of Controlled Interest in Land.
- c. Identify and publish priorities and plans for land and buildings, including the reuse of vacant and derelict land, and publicly share opportunities and potential for land and buildings to be re-used, leased, managed, or transferred into community ownership.
- d. Set out clear decision-making processes for land and buildings and share these publicly. Make it clear how people can get involved and influence decisions.
- e. Work with other anchor institutions and other key stakeholders in your area to share information about land and identify opportunities to collaborate on development, use and management where possible.
- f. Support communities and third sector organisations to map community owned assets, to publicise the stake they have in the local economy and raise awareness of opportunities provided by asset ownership.
- g. Undertake voluntary registration of land and buildings owned on the Land Register.

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Why take this approach?

The approach set out in this guidance aligns with the [Place Principle](#) which sets out that all those responsible for providing services and looking after assets in a place need to work and plan together, and with local communities, to improve the lives of people, support inclusive and sustainable economic growth and create more successful places.

Land and buildings that are held by anchor institutions should be owned, used and managed in a socially just way that delivers for local communities. Taking a community wealth building approach can bring the following benefits:

- More productive use of land and property
- Increased engagement and participation in decision-making
- Increased opportunities for communities and local businesses
- Retain wealth locally
- Develop community capacity and confidence
- Deliver National Outcomes (as set out on following page)
- Reduce number of vacant and derelict sites and their impact on communities
- Realise sustainable economic opportunities
- Address climate change and meet net zero aspirations
- Contribute to improved ecology and biodiversity
- Attract sustainable external investment that is appropriate for your place
- Increase local control of assets and the economy
- Improving and supporting diversity and inclusion.

When should this guidance be used?

This guidance can be used by anchor institutions who are starting to explore community wealth building in their area. Organisations might be interested in assessing how the way that land is owned, used and managed in their area fits with the principles of community wealth building and land rights and responsibilities.

It can be used by anchor institutions who have identified priority areas for their community wealth building strategy which include actions relating to the land and property pillar and are identifying and prioritising the steps they will take to put these actions into practice. It can also support collaboration between anchor institutions and with other stakeholders, including local communities.

How does this guidance fit with existing legislation and policies?

This guidance exists to complement existing legislation and policies. Some of the actions identified in the guidance will already be implemented in the way land and property is used and managed in your organisation and might be required by existing legislation and regulation. However, considering them as a whole and through a community wealth building and land rights and responsibilities lens may bring a fresh perspective and new ideas.

While they may not be new, there are opportunities to consider how actions are monitored and reviewed and whether there are any improvements that could be made to how they are implemented, for example through communicating about the actions or making information more accessible. They can also be incorporated into strategies and action plans.



Definitions

Community wealth building (CWB) is a people-centred approach to local economic development, which redirects wealth back into the local economy, and places control and benefits into the hands of local people. Developed initially by the Democracy Collaborative in the United States, and championed in the UK by the progressive economics think tank Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES), CWB aims to ensure the economic system builds wealth and prosperity for everyone.

Anchor institutions are organisations that play a key role in a local economy, often due to their scale, ownership of land and buildings, being key employers in the area, and / or due to their spending power. They are generally connected to the place in terms of their activities and their physical location. Examples include local authorities, NHS boards, universities and colleges, enterprise agencies, housing associations, community planning partners, large local businesses, and third sector organisations.

Land includes buildings and other structures, land covered with water, and any right or interest in or over land, and can be in either an urban or a rural context.

When we talk about a **community**, we mean the individuals who live in a particular place. This can be an urban or rural area. It can be defined as whole towns, single streets, whole islands or peninsulas, other large geographic areas or small villages or neighbourhoods.

In some cases, such as for Asset Transfer requests, a community of interest can make a request for ownership, use or lease of land to relevant public bodies. These are communities of people who are connected through a shared interest rather than by place. However, the focus of this protocol is on those who live locally and may wish to own, lease or use land in the local area, rather than on communities of interest.

Where we mention **transparency**, we are talking about the openness of the organisation or individual, for example how easily information and contact details can be accessed, and the availability of information about land use, management and ownership.

When we mention **collaborative working**, we mean any arrangement between two or more parties that facilitates the sharing and/ or use of resources. Collaborative working can include tenancies, short-term leases, partnership arrangements, management agreements and informal arrangements. There are lots of reasons why a collaborative approach may be taken and this approach can bring mutual benefits.

When we talk about **good stewardship**, we mean the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care. For land activities, this means:

- All land is used and managed in compliance with existing and relevant legislation, codes and regulations
- Decision-makers have awareness of the long-term impact of actions taken in relation to land and the impact they have on many aspects of people's lives, including housing, employment and the viability of businesses, as well as on the environment and biodiversity
- When decisions are made about land use and management, the potential harmful or negative effects on the environment and on other people are considered, and efforts are made to minimise these
- When decisions are made about land use and management, the scope for achieving wider public benefit is considered.

Natural Capital is the environmental resources (e.g. plants, animals, air, water, soils) that combine to yield a flow of benefits to people.

Just Transition is defined by the Scottish Government as both the outcome and the process that must be undertaken in partnership with those impacted by the transition to net zero, to achieve a fairer and greener future for all. It supports a net zero and climate resilient economy in a way that delivers fairness and tackles inequality and justice.

By **sustainable development** we mean development which meets the needs of present communities without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Inclusive growth means growth that combines increased economic prosperity with greater equality, creates opportunities for all, and distributes the benefits of increased prosperity fairly.

Productive use refers to the opportunities to use or re-use land and buildings in the broadest economic, social or environmental sense. It may include removal of barriers to use and/or the creation of wider benefits. In some circumstances, such as the restoration of natural habitats or long-term landscape regeneration, non-intervention may also be appropriate.

When we refer to **public benefit** this means providing wider benefits to society such as the provision of food, timber, recreational opportunities, environmental management and nature conservation, and provision of land for housing, commerce and industry.

Vacant land is land which is not being used or managed for an identified purpose and has the potential to be an appropriate site for development without need for treatment or remediation. A vacant site may have had prior development on it or have had preparatory work undertaken in anticipation of future development. It includes buildings that are structurally sound and in a reasonable state of repair. It excludes land previously used for mineral extraction or waste disposal which is being restored for agriculture, forestry or other open countryside use.

Derelict land is land which has been so damaged by previous development that it can't be brought back into beneficial use without treatment, for example demolition of buildings or dealing with contamination. It includes abandoned and unoccupied buildings in an advanced state of disrepair. It excludes land which has been or is being restored for agriculture, forestry, or other open countryside use, and land damaged by previous development which is being restored for nature conservation or amenity use.

Monitoring and Evaluation

It is a good idea to collate and establish baseline information when you identify your priorities for action and to choose ways of measuring progress that suit your organisation and the other anchor institutions that you work with. This helps to build an understanding what works and what doesn't in your area, and why. Many of the actions identified in this guidance can be monitored through existing performance indicators.

The Scottish Land Commission wishes to thank the expert steering group members from:

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Glasgow City Region PMO

North Ayrshire Council

Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors

Scottish Government



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