

# COMMUNITY ASSETS

Supporting community  
ownership





Helmsdale Station CIC (Sutherland) rescued and restored the station buildings, under a long-term lease, to provide station facilities and create holiday accommodation

## COMMUNITY ASSETS

# HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS ENTERPRISE

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) is an ambitious organisation with a unique remit which integrates economic and community development to achieve sustainable progress in every part of our region.

As the Scottish Government's enterprise agency for the Highlands and Islands, our aim is to build an increasingly successful and competitive region in which people choose to live, work, study and invest. We achieve this through our approach which integrates enabling economic growth and strengthening communities across the Highlands and Islands.

With teams located in all parts of our region, we invest in, empower and enable our businesses, social enterprises and communities to grow, be innovative, and become resilient.

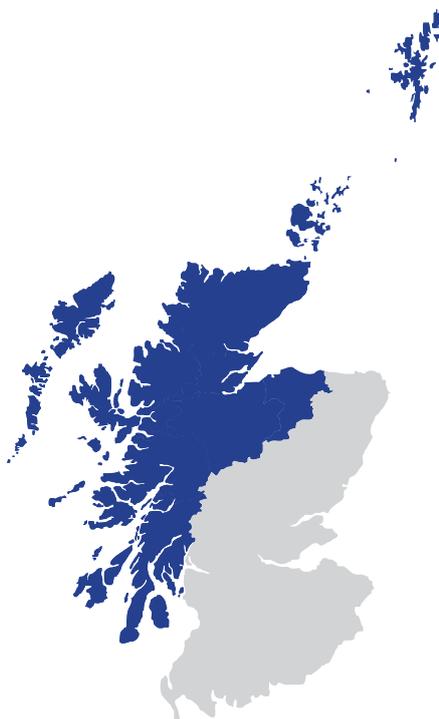
## OUR PRIORITIES

- Supporting businesses and social enterprises to shape and realise their growth aspirations
- Strengthening communities and fragile areas
- Developing growth sectors, particularly distinctive regional opportunities
- Creating the conditions for a competitive and low-carbon region

## OUR APPROACH

Our approach to strengthening communities is threefold:

- 1** We invest in building community capacity, confidence and business skills
- 2** We empower communities to acquire, manage and exploit community assets for community benefit
- 3** We enable sustainable growth in the social economy through strong social and community enterprises





The official opening of two multi-use workshop units belonging to Kirkton Woodland and Heritage Group (KWHG) on land they own at the Smithy, Strathcarron

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Communities in the Highlands and Islands have a long history of doing things for themselves, and today are at the forefront of community land and asset ownership.

All our communities host a huge amount of talent and energy. Our role is to help develop and release this, empowering and enabling local people to determine and control their own futures.

We believe that community development and economic development go hand in hand. Through owning and managing land, property and other assets, communities are able to generate income to advance their own development, creating jobs, providing vital services, building and improving houses, and much more.

The path to community ownership can be a demanding one, requiring perseverance and ingenuity to face challenges, overcome setbacks and achieve a positive outcome. It is also worth remembering that gaining ownership is just the start of the journey. Making these assets work for the community is what brings wide and lasting benefit.

With our support, local people are planning for the long term, building stronger communities for themselves – and generations to follow.

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Through their own dedication and hard work, countless communities in the Highlands and Islands are overcoming geographical disadvantage and building greater local resilience, confidence and ambition.

Throughout our region, communities now own and manage over 420,000 acres of land and forestry. Many other assets are also community owned – from ‘lifeline’ shops and petrol stations to business units, visitor facilities and renewable energy schemes generating energy, income and jobs.

Many communities acquire assets to sustain vital services, such as local provision of food, fuel and other goods. Ownership is also a major driver of important economic opportunities – enabling communities to create business premises and visitor facilities, and to manage land and forestry to support jobs and provide housing.

Asset-driven projects transform entire communities, and lead to long-term growth. Profits from social enterprises and renewable energy projects are typically invested in further projects to sustain and grow population over many years.

All community-owned assets are helping to empower the local people who own and manage them. With investment and ongoing support from HIE, they are creating the conditions which are driving sustainable local regeneration.

## HIE - INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES

Through area teams and local development managers throughout the region, HIE supports communities to identify opportunities, develop robust plans and acquire and manage assets successfully.

As an agency which combines both community and economic development, we employ a wide range of powers to deliver enabling projects, including broadband and property investments, drive the growth of businesses and social enterprises, and support ambitious, hard working communities to achieve resilience and sustainability.

Our **products and services** to help communities own and manage assets include:

- start-up grants to assist at the outset of a new project
- access to professional advice and financial support towards project planning costs
- short-term revenue funding to support intensive project planning stages
- discretionary capital assistance towards asset purchase

- investment-readiness advice and sign-posting to investors
- support with governance and developing organisational structures

For larger or more complex projects, we can also provide longer-term revenue funding towards the employment of a development manager whose support can make a crucial difference during the early years of asset ownership in particular.

The community asset sector is diverse but the common thread is local people working together to make their communities stronger.

People are the key asset in community ownership and our Maximising Community Assets programme helps develop their potential. We can help with costs to:

- attend learning events or conferences
- go on a study or exchange visit
- run your own training seminar
- network with other communities, to learn and share

HIE support for projects following acquisition is largely delivered through account management. This means that we work intensively with a community-led enterprise over time to deliver sustainable economic growth and social impacts.

Our support centres on the development of a growth plan spanning three to five years. We then support the implementation of the plan to deliver positive outcomes for the community.

## CASE STUDIES



### KNOYDART, LOCHABER

Since Knoydart Estate became community-owned in 1999, the population has almost doubled – from 60 to 115.

Knoydart Foundation upgraded the water and sewerage system serving the peninsula, which is accessible only on foot or by boat. Among other achievements, they renovated existing houses and built three new ones, refurbished an established bunkhouse, created a new campsite and set up a ranger service. They also let a number of properties to local businesses, providing employment opportunities, services and facilities for residents and visitors.



### BONAR BRIDGE PO, SUTHERLAND

The Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust acquired Bonar Bridge Post Office in 2014 to ensure this lifeline service was retained for the community.

The property included a self-contained flat which has been refurbished and let as affordable housing. The Trust has also secured planning permission to develop further affordable units within the Post Office grounds.

Other projects under development include a micro hydro energy scheme, sheltered housing and rebuilding the fire-damaged Falls of Shin visitor centre.



### KILFINAN, ARGYLL

Kilfinan Community Forest Company was established in 2007 to acquire the Upper Acharossan Forest from Forestry Commission Scotland.

They acquired the first portion in 2007 and have since established a successful timber business, employing five local people. A broad volunteer base assists in increasing access to and enjoyment of the forest.

In 2015 the Trust will acquire the balance of the forest to create more jobs and training opportunities. Increased profits generated by the community company will be invested in other local projects.



### COVESEA LIGHTHOUSE, MORAY

The 19th century Stevenson lighthouse at Covesea in Moray was bought by the community in 2013, along with two cottages and land.

Covesea Lighthouse Community Company plans a visitor centre at the lighthouse and an education and interpretation programme. Three new full time jobs and a volunteer programme are helping to create a positive experience for the 10,000 visitors expected every year.

Income from holiday letting is helping underpin the financial sustainability of the visitor operations.



### BALLURE WOOD, ARGYLL

Here We Are is an established development trust operating in Cairndow, by Loch Fyne. HIE supported this community enterprise to grow an existing biomass business by acquiring 37 hectares of woodland in 2014.

HIE and Here We Are responded swiftly when Ballure Wood was advertised for sale, as the timber market is very buoyant and woodlands coming to the market sell quickly. Acquisition will increase the trust's annual turnover by £40,000 and help produce 1.75m kWh of renewable energy every year.



### ISLE OF SCALPAY, HARRIS

In 2013 the owner of Scalpay gifted the island to the community. Following a feasibility study and extensive community consultation, the 320 islanders chose to join forces with the neighbouring trust which acquired North Harris Estate in 2003.

Scalpay and North Harris Estate is now managed as one community asset on behalf of the whole community. Further funding has enabled the trust to employ a Scalpay development officer who is now working to bring forward projects identified in the community plan.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

You can find more information about how we support communities and the work of HIE as a whole on our website. Click on the Support for Communities tab on the home page.

[www.hie.co.uk](http://www.hie.co.uk)

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