

**DEVELOPMENT TRUSTS
ASSOCIATION SCOTLAND**

3 YEAR STRATEGY

2024 - 2027

June 2024

Contents

Foreword	1
Our Vision and Our Mission	2
Introduction	3
Future Direction for Longer Term Action	4
Our Values	5
Our Strategic Goals & Actions	6



Foreword



Pauline Smith, Chief Executive

I welcome you to our new strategy for 2024-27 which delivers our refreshed vision, mission and goals for the coming 3 years. In 2023 we celebrated 20 years of dynamic, ambitious and innovative community-led work and we're building on what's working well whilst also evolving our support to the new needs of communities.

At our core remains the support we provide for the creation, evolution and growth of Development Trusts across Scotland. Development Trusts are community anchor organisations,[1] they are community-led and owned, place-based and enterprising. Organisations who own assets and deliver thousands of essential services/activities across Scotland, producing an economic, environmental, social and cultural impact at a local level but have a national affect. On the 1st April 2024, our Development Trust (full/provisional) membership was 347 across urban, rural and islands in Scotland plus 102 aspiring members. These organisations have to meet our membership criteria, ensuring that governance, community engagement and current delivery and/or ambitions are truly community-led and democratic, providing reassurance throughout our network on the stature and nature of their work. I hear on a weekly basis how valued our dedicated development officer team support is, helping local people at a grass roots level every step of their journey.

I am passionate about true community empowerment and providing the support needed for our vision to be reached. Therefore, in addition to our support to Development Trusts, we are also committed to helping a wider range of community-led organisations, in asset transfers and to find alternative finance options. I believe that this is critical to building a broader movement of positive place-based change across Scotland.

Our Community Ownership Support Service has helped 1230 communities across Scotland consider asset transfer as an option, resulting in ownership of 245 community assets. Buildings and land in private or public ownership (often derelict or being closed by public bodies), assets that have significant importance to the local people that live there and who have the drive, passion and commitment to make them a success. Our team providing the help and support to navigate the, often complex, process for local people to reach their goals.

Our Community Shares Scotland team is evolving into the Democratic Finance Scotland team, building on the successes of helping communities across Scotland to raise £20 million in community shares finance since 2014. This community shares support has activated 18,000 citizen investors and helped launch 70 community-owned enterprises including hydro schemes, shops, pubs and community hubs. The evolution to Democratic Finance Scotland (with Scottish Communities Finance) is due to an increasing need and demand for communities to diversify their sources of income. Our programme will encourage a move away from grant dependency, promote citizen investment and harness community-led opportunities in renewable energy.

[1] Community Anchor definition; independent, community-led organisations that are multi-purpose and they are there for the long run (not a quick fix) often driving positive change and regeneration (more info available at <https://scottishcommunityalliance.org.uk/about/anchor-orgs/>)



Our Vision

A Scotland that respects, embraces and supports sustainable and thriving community-led and owned organisations, working in urban, rural and island communities. Places where citizens have the powers and investment to develop their communities sustainably and overcome economic, environmental, social and cultural challenges.

Our Mission

'Supporting communities to thrive, through our community-led network and national place-based sustainable action'

Introduction

The shaping of this strategy for Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS) has involved reflecting on the impact to date that our members and their communities have achieved and the ongoing challenges that many face. Communities are providing vital services and support and bringing life back to land, assets, buildings and infrastructure plus activating citizen investors and democratic finance. The covid pandemic delivery of emergency support by our members and the wider community sector highlighted the importance of the third sector and how and why investment in a strong community sector is needed more than ever.

Our members and the wider community sector have proven over the last 20+ years that they deliver a significant economic impact locally whilst also supporting the most vulnerable in society. They take care of people, deliver vital services and address the demands and needs within their localities i.e. environmental/employment/education, to create wealth and a wellbeing economy on a local level that has a national and global impact.

Our mission to support communities to thrive, through locally-led sustainable action across Scotland is a key component of building a nation that can respond to the current moment, and the many overlapping crises we face. We provide the advice, trust, encouragement and support for local solutions delivered by local people. Our network of Development Trusts and other community-led organisations create strong community infrastructures[2] that are vital and ambitious.

Over the lifetime of this strategy and beyond, we aim to address the needs of communities across Scotland to tackle and overcome inequalities, improve the wellbeing of the country, and it's economic, social, and environmental health. DTAS will continue to lobby and influence policy at local and national government levels and locate the solutions and provide the support so that our members and communities continue to thrive.

Core to our strategy will be advocating for investment in community infrastructure and community wealth building[3], delivery of local democracy and meaningful decision-making powers that empower citizens and strengthen community-led and place-based action on what matters to local people. Our actions will tackle issues such as depopulation in rural areas, transfer of community assets, democratic finance, fairer funding and investment for the sector.

DTAS will be guided by our members and the communities that we work with. We work in a space of evolving government priorities on land reform, wellbeing economy, community wealth building, local democracy and community empowerment, and we will continue to work proactively to build relationships, partnerships and influence policy.

[2] Community Infrastructure definition - Community infrastructure refers to the physical and social systems that support and connect a community, including facilities, services, and networks such as schools, hospitals, transportation, utilities, parks, and community centres. It forms the backbone of a community, facilitating daily life, economic activity, social interaction, and overall well-being.

[3] Community Wealth Building - an economic development approach that prioritises local ownership, democratic control, and equitable distribution of wealth to build prosperous and resilient communities. (<https://cles.org.uk/the-community-wealth-building-centre-of-excellence/>)



Future direction for longer term action to support economic and political system change in Scotland

Beyond the duration of this strategy, we are committed to working towards an economy and democracy in Scotland that is fit for purpose, recognising that the multiple crises we face require a systemic response that considers the needs, not just of citizens and members now, but those of future generations - providing a pathway that moves us away from reacting to system/market failure and its consequences, to an era where communities are truly empowered and thriving.

DTAS believes our sector and our members have an important role in that change, they tackle issues now that arise from system or market failure in communities, but also prefigure the kind of community level, democratic responses which might be applied more widely to effect system change, often blurring the lines between what have traditionally been thought of as economic and community development.

We will focus our attention on the following themes and policy areas:

- Strong, local, participative democracies, learning from good practice in our membership, from international examples, and supporting the Scottish Government, Democracy Matters process.
- Building an inclusive wellbeing economy, for example through community wealth building, and encouraging a broader conception of economic development which includes the actions of the public, private and third sector.
- Land reform and community ownership – recognising the crucial questions of power, ownership, and benefit and the intersection of these issues with democracy and economic development.
- Democratic Finance – recognising that community-led enterprises must diversify and increase their sources of income and that citizen investors can strengthen and help sustain activity for future generations



Our Values

Underpinning our strategy are key values for DTAS which also reflect the values of the network that we support.

Ambitious

We see the potential for growth in the Development Trust movement and are ambitious and confident in our role and that communities can meet their own needs with sufficient capacity and resource.

Democratic and community-led

We believe in participative, deliberative democracy and advocate for this in communities. Our members and clients are community-led and democratic, often owning their own land and assets on behalf of their communities. DTAS continues to be a member-led and democratically governed social enterprise.

Trusted

We are approachable and listen to our members and partners, treating others with respect, and trust communities to find their own solutions. We are trusted by partners to deliver funding and to be a voice for our members, and are trusted by members and clients to deliver effective support and influence on their behalf.

Enterprising

We believe that Development Trusts are central to socio-economic development and deliver enterprising solutions to community challenges. We support that enterprising spirit and endeavour to be enterprising as an organisation.

Inclusive and equitable

We are on our own journey as an organisation of working on our diversity, equity and inclusion practices and will support and encourage our members and the Development Trust movement to do the same. We support wellbeing at work, and the wellbeing of staff and volunteers across our network.



Our Strategic Goals & Actions

We have identified four strategic priorities for 2024-2027 that shape our direction and activity for this period but also set the stage for the movement in Scotland over the next 20 years.

- 1 Advocacy and Influencing
- 2 Building resilient and strong community infrastructure
- 3 Communication, research and knowledge exchange
- 4 Sustaining a strong, successful and reliable organisation



Advocacy and influencing - Community-led organisations are recognised as fundamental to the economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing of Scotland

Community-led organisations are employers, change-makers, innovators, landowners, energy producers, educators, youth workers, carers and much more. DTAS will confidently and boldly influence and shape the environment, culture and policy that we work within and advocate for our members and community-led organisations. Ensuring their work is taken seriously, they are treated fairly, and genuinely recognised for their social, economic, cultural and environmental impact and truly empowered to continue.

Action 1

Proactively engage members and be a strong advocate, ambassador and voice for our members and clients

Action 2

Engage with government and other key decision makers to influence policy and legislation

Action 3

Provide a forum for policy-makers and partners to consult and listen to members, creating spaces for change and action

Action 4

Identify and action opportunities for enterprising, place-based economic development

Action 5

Lobby for investment into communities, through core government grants and alternative finance options

Action 6

Deliver continued professional development (CPD) opportunities to agencies that can influence progressive community impact

Action 7

Actively deliver and influence community benefit (in all forms) to ensure impact locally and nationally



Building resilient and strong community infrastructure – DTAS delivers high quality support services to advise, equip and help communities to thrive

The need for trusted and approachable advice and support is crucial as the community-led sector faces unique challenges. The uncertainty of funding, continuous community engagement, good governance and local people with a determination and passion to make positive changes where they live and/or work, mean increased pressures. DTAS will deliver direct support through our membership offer and client support and will network with other sectoral partners to ensure delivery is accessible and relevant.

Action 1

Provide dedicated advisor help and support for communities throughout their journey, from start-up onwards

Action 2

Build the Development Trust movement by supporting every community that wants one to understand what a Development Trust is and explore it as an option for them

Action 3

Build organisational capacity by delivering training, peer-to-peer learning, mentoring and support to groups

Action 4

Work in partnership and collaborate with other intermediaries and support agencies to ensure the best possible supportive environment for our members and clients

Action 5

Support communities to explore the wide range of options for asset transfer and acquisition; building their capacity for sustainable community ownership

Action 6

Develop and deliver Democratic Finance models and support

Action 7

Support our members and clients to explore and embed fair work, diversity, equity and inclusion practices and promote civility and wellbeing

Action 8

Support our members and clients to be part of the transition towards a green economy



Communication, research and knowledge exchange - the impact of Development Trusts and community-led organisations is widely understood, celebrated and championed

The community infrastructure that exists in Scotland, has been created by local people who want to address needs in their area and as such has a diverse impact on our country. Development Trusts often operate in challenging circumstances, helping some of the most vulnerable in society. We will seek to fully understand issues facing our sector, and their impact on them, and celebrate and promote their achievements.

Action 1

Develop research and provide insights into our members to understand challenges and impacts that inform our operational planning and support our strategy, advocacy, lobbying and influencing work

Action 2

Develop effective outward facing communications, campaigns and impact reports on issues that are being faced by our network

Action 3

Develop effective member facing communications to ensure our members can access the information they need

Action 4

Deliver an annual conference and regional events across Scotland

Action 5

Actively seek knowledge exchange and learning opportunities outwith Scotland to benefit the movement



Sustaining a strong, successful and reliable organisation – DTAS has the capacity and confidence to deliver our strategy

Aligning with our values, we will ensure that DTAS operates to the highest standard and performance in all aspects of our work. We will foster a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement with systems, policies and practices that empower our Board and staff team to achieve their full potential and in turn our support in the sector.

Action 1

Implement and embed a People Strategy that attracts, retains, develops and supports staff, whilst promoting wellbeing and equity, diversity and inclusion across the organisation

Action 2

Provide opportunities for our Board development, establish regular evaluations and transparent decision-making processes to ensure effective governance

Action 3

Maintain financial stability by diversifying income sources through funding, enterprise activities and investment opportunities that build financial resilience

Action 4

Invest in and develop systems and processes that support staff effectively and deliver successful outcomes for DTAS and our members and clients



DT SNAPSHOT



Average Development Trust

Overview of the key average statistics for development trusts across Scotland in DTAS Membership. Based on findings from the 2023 Members Survey.

OVERVIEW

Organisation size and Membership



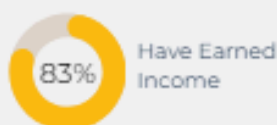
INCOME AND FUNDING

£277,552

Average Annual Income

£92,775

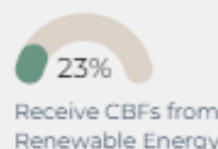
Average Earned Income



ALTERNATIVE FINANCE



47% Of DTs not using AF plan to use some form of it in future.



Most Popular AF Used:

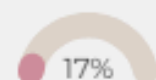
1. Community Lottery
2. Crowdfunding
3. Philanthropic Giving

TOP 10 ACTIVITIES



DEPRIVATION (SIMD)

*Note that SIMD is not an entirely accurate measure as it tends to obscure rural deprivation.



ASSETS



Most members own two types of asset (land/woodland and buildings).

Phone: 0131 220 2456
Email: info@dtascot.org.uk
Website: www.dtascot.org.uk