

# DTAS

# Community Benefit Funding and Shared Ownership Members Survey

*Full Report*

*April 2025*



Development  
Trusts Association  
Scotland

A Thriving Community-led Network



DEMOCRATIC  
FINANCE  
SCOTLAND

# Executive Summary

In December 2024 DTAS conducted a member-wide survey to inform our response to the [Scottish Government's Community Benefits from Net Zero Energy Developments Consultation](#). The survey focused on assessing DTAS Members' involvement with and views on Community Benefit Funding (CBF) and shared ownership (SO).

The survey received 63 responses (18% of DTAS Membership), these were evenly split between organisations in receipt of CBF and those not in receipt of CBF. There was a wide geographic spread, with responses covering 20 out of 32 local authority areas, areas with the highest from Highland (17%) and Argyll and Bute (13%).

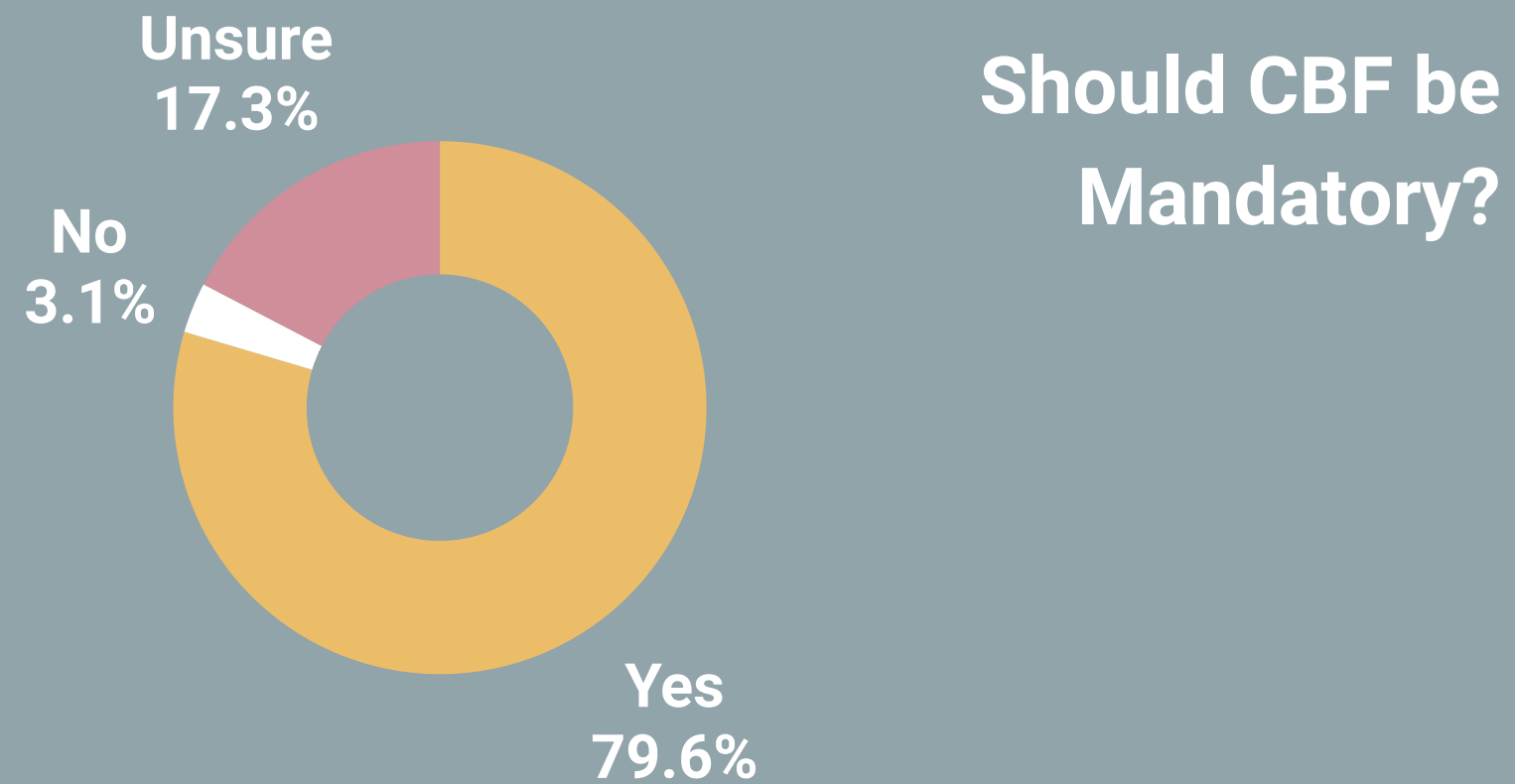
The survey responses were skewed towards rural groups<sup>1</sup> with underrepresentation from urban areas. A majority (68%) came from rural groups, 26% of those rural groups were island based. Only 16% of responses were submitted by groups based in urban areas, and 15% from those in small towns.

## Community Benefit Funds Statistics:

- ➔ Respondents from rural areas were the most likely to receive CBF, 64% from Accessible Rural Areas and 55% of Remote Rural areas being in receipt.
- ➔ Only 10% of those in Urban Areas received CBF.
- ➔ The median amount of CBF received per annum was £40,000. Min. £1,500 and Max. £600,000.
- ➔ 39% of respondents receive their CBF as a one-off lump sum, 43% receive regular recurring annual payments and 18% have a mix of these.
- ➔ The majority of CBF comes from large onshore wind developments (86%).

*1. In the analysis we utilised the 6-Fold Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2020, [More information here](#).*

# Key Findings – Community Benefit Funding



- Respondents in remote rural areas were most likely to answer unsure to the issue of should CBFs be mandatory (31%).
- Those who responded 'no' noted that this could be seen as a tax and disincentive investment, and that it might reduce flexibility of use.
- Those who were unsure generally needed more information before deciding and were concerned about the unintended consequences of such a move.

## What should mandatory CBFs apply to?

- ➔ 74% of responses thought that all forms of renewables should be included.
- ➔ 57% mentioned transmission networks should be included.
- ➔ Only one response (4%) thought only Onshore wind should be included.

## What amount should CBFs be set at?

Rate set by the Community

39%

£5,000 per MW

17%

£7,000 per MW

17%

Set Proportion of Revenue

13%

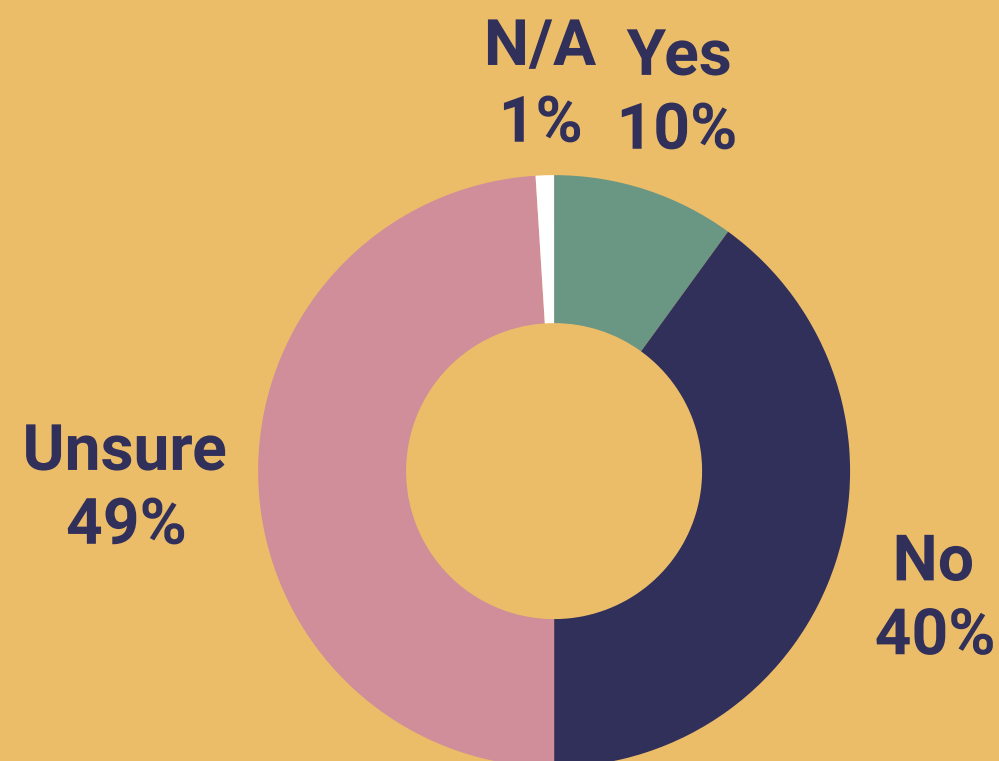
# Key Findings – Community Benefit Funding

Common themes for supporting mandatory CBF include:

- They deliver consistent community funding
- Avoid the appearance of bribery from developers.
- It empowers communities and would improve governance practices.

However, participants noted that mandatory schemes must be accompanied by better guidance, managed by the third sector, consistent nationally, and be less prescriptive.

Do you think  
the CBF model  
in Scotland is  
Fair?



## Equity and Fairness

Regardless of response comments highlighted issues around:

- Fairness, transparency, governance and accessibility of funds.
- How areas of benefit are defined.
- Capacity of communities dictating if they have the resources to apply/negotiate.
- Some noted the CBF rate per MW being far too low.

It's also evident that although the current good practice guidance explicitly states that CBFs are not intended as compensation for disruption or detriment to land/property values, many view them as such.

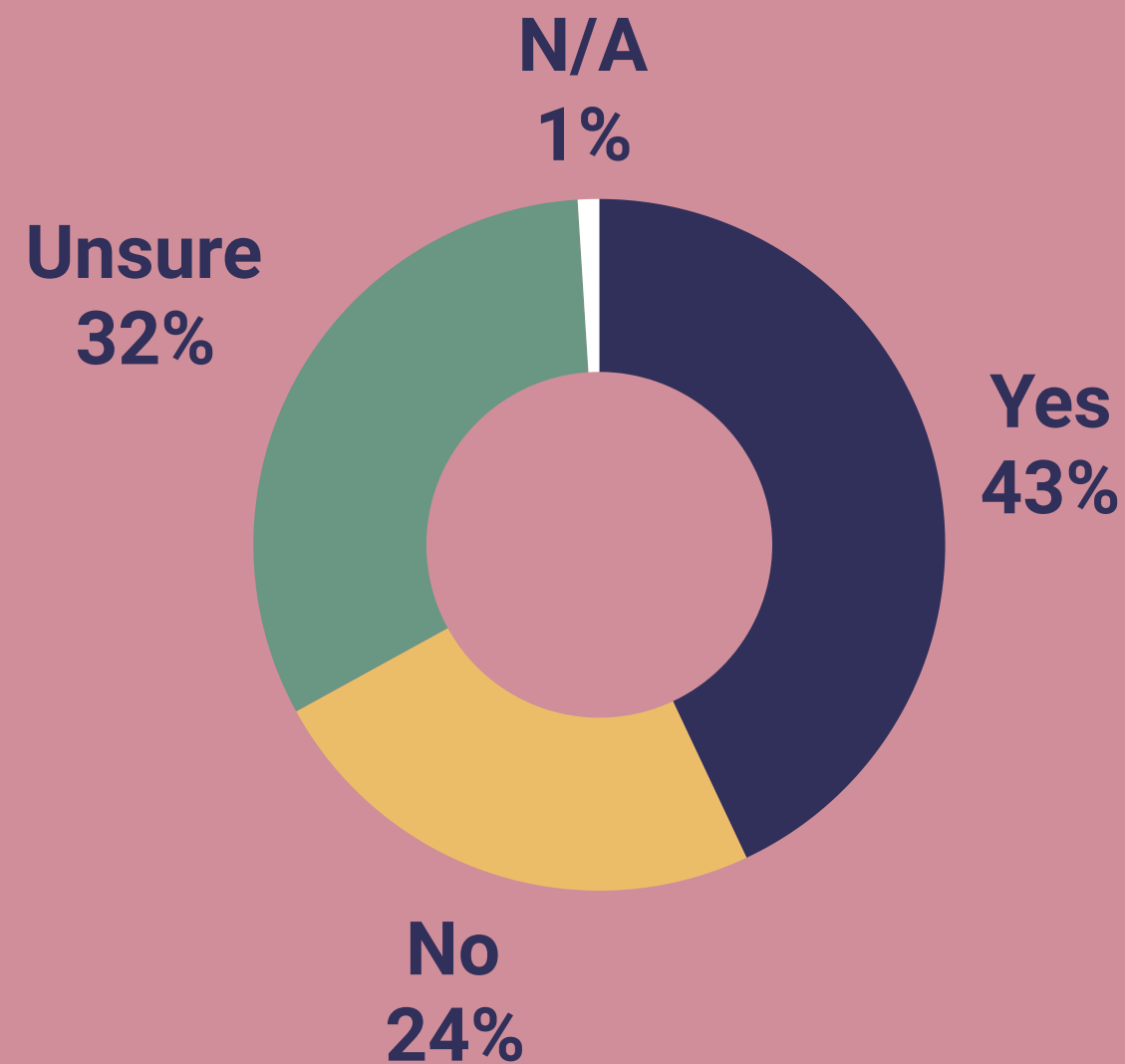
**Suggestions of How to Make it Fairer:**

- Reform the rate p/MW: most common suggestion.
- Strengthen governance and transparency of funds.
- Address equity of distribution.

# Key Findings – Community Benefit Funding

## Potential of a National fund to address inequities:

*Are you supportive of the idea of a portion of CBFs being allocated to National or Regional Wealth Funds?*



- 56% of respondents who do not receive CBF express support for a national/regional wealth fund. Compared to only 28% of respondents who receive CBF and support such a fund.
- Both groups of respondents, those who receive and those who do not receive CBF, had significant comments indicating they were unsure of supporting this initiative.

There were many strong views expressed on either side of this issue. However, all respondents, regardless of their support for such a fund, expressed common concerns:

- Local authorities and national government absorbing funds.
- Communities losing control of local funding.
- Need to ensure any approach taken is decided in conjunction with communities in closest proximity to developments.
- More information was needed on what this would look like in practice.

# Key Findings DTAS Role: Support, Advocacy and Influencing

Almost half of all respondents (40%) stated they would like more support with CBF

➔ Most groups that want more support do not currently receive any CBF. 56% of those that do not receive CBF wanted more support.

➔ Groups in urban areas and small towns were more likely to request support than those in rural areas

## Most common types of support requests:

- Strategic and collaborative use of CBF across regions.
- Early-stage support negotiating and securing arrangements.
- Clear signposting of impartial information and awareness of opportunities.
- Support for more equitable CBF distribution.

## Advocacy and influencing : Equity

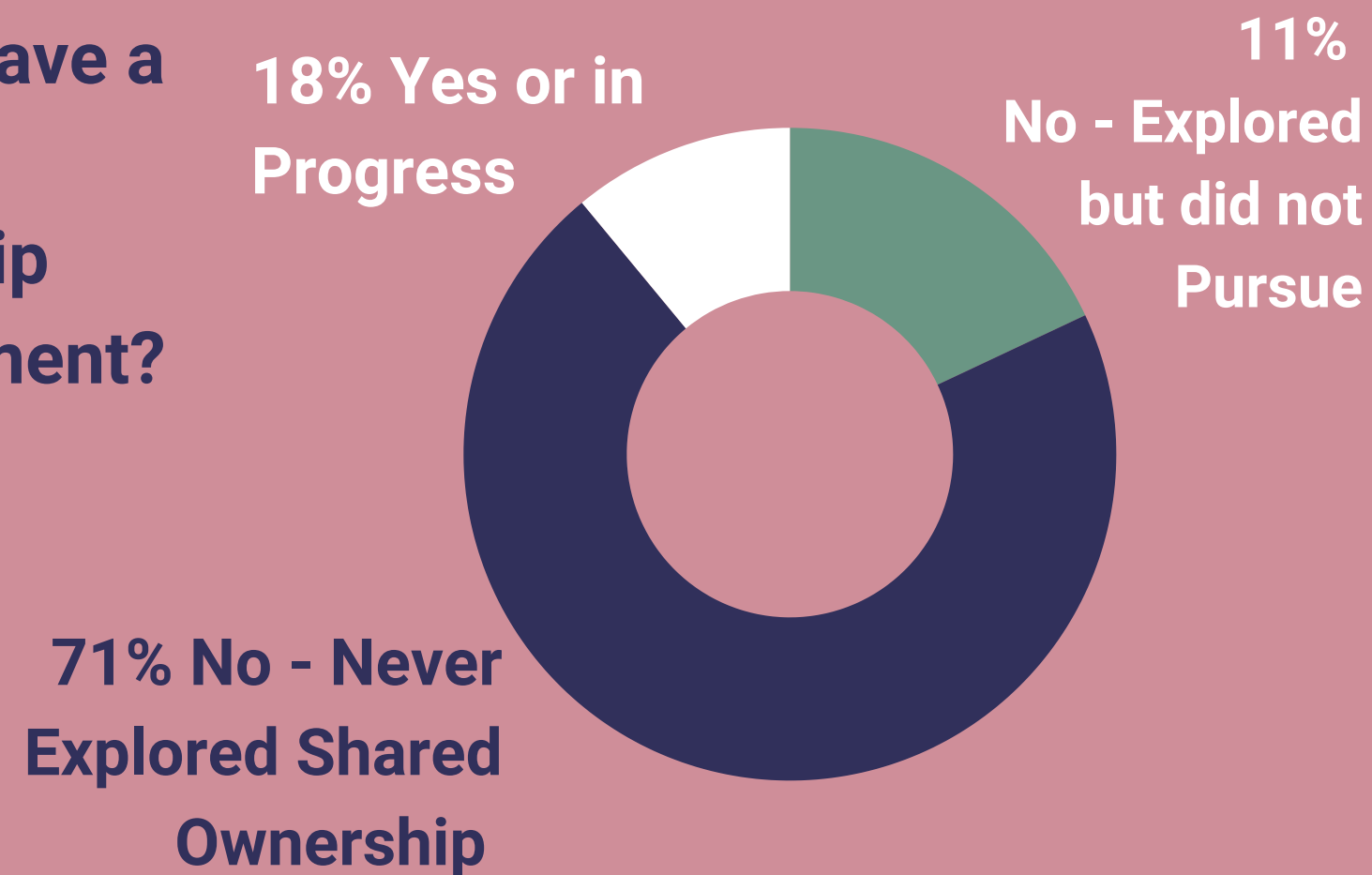
Respondents were invited to suggest mechanisms that DTAS could support or implement to ensure a fair and effective distribution of funds.

### Key themes

- A focus on upskilling and capacity building
- Targeted use of CBF for climate action
- Collaboration, pooling of resources
- Use of existing community organisations (i.e. DTs) to distribute CBF
- Simplified transparent processes.

# Key Findings - Shared Ownership

Do you have a shared ownership arrangement?



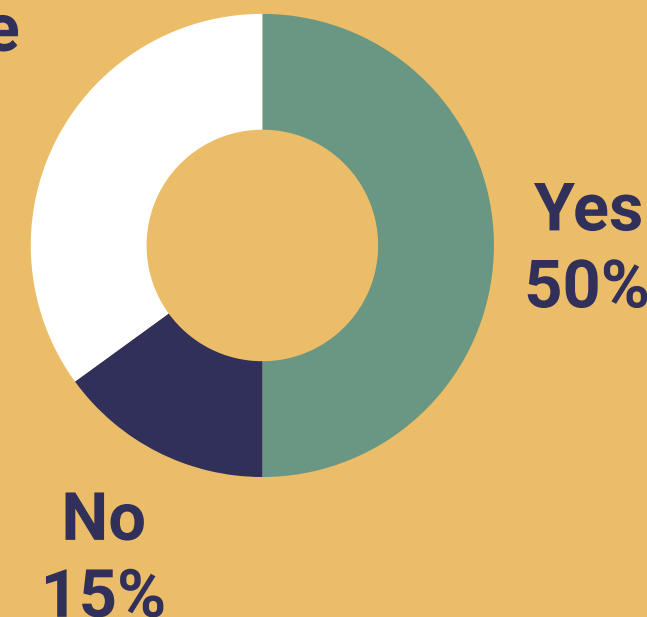
➔ Opportunities for shared ownership are mainly in remote rural areas with 21% of these DTs having an arrangement. Compared with only 11% in urban areas.

Those in urban areas and small towns were more likely to support the communities not in proximity to developments having access to shared ownership. Common reasons were equity and fairness and opportunity to collaborate. Caveats noted were that communities in proximity should have preference/larger share of revenue, and some expressed this option should only be for offshore developments.

Most common reasons for not exploring or pursuing SO:

- Lack of Available opportunities
- Difficult Negotiations with Developers
- Lack of Financing and Financial Risk
- Limited Knowledge
- Lack of eligibility
- Not a Priority

Maybe  
35%



Are you supportive of communities not next to developments being included in shared ownership offers?

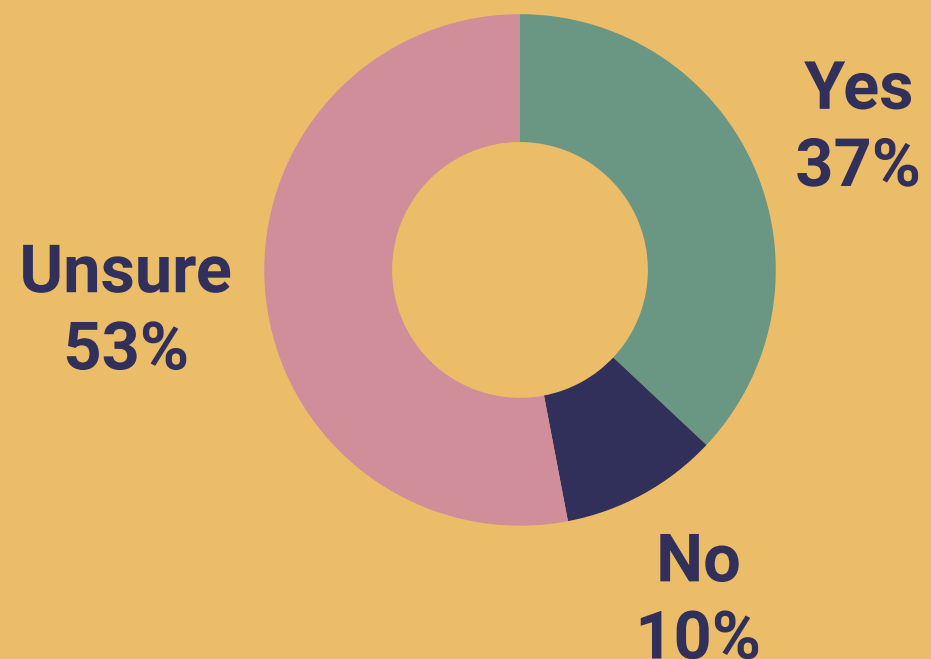
# Key Findings - Shared Ownership

Those that think it should be mandatory noted that it should apply to:

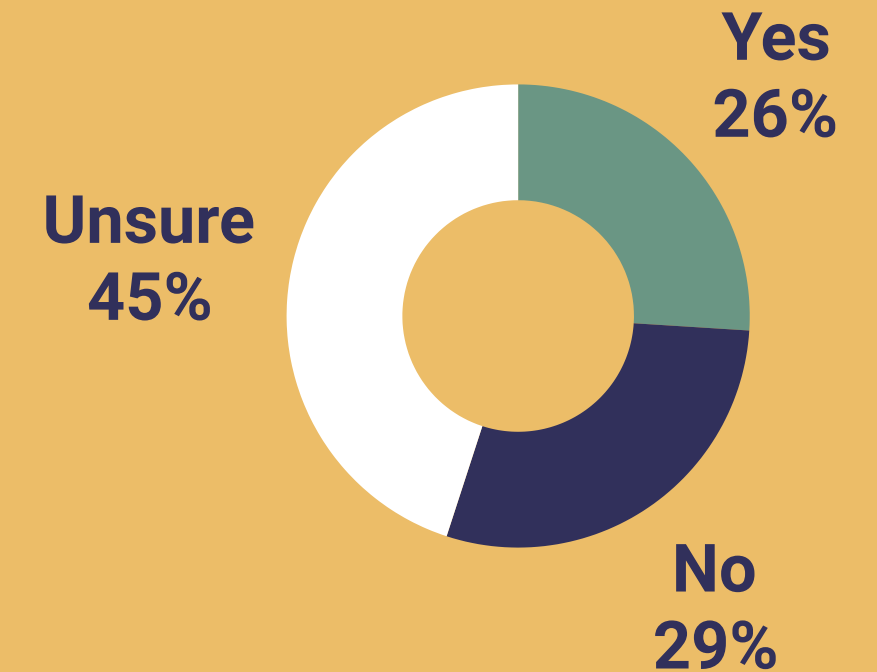
- Only onshore developments
- All developments (Onshore/Offshore/Transmissions)
- Only offshore developments

A few responses noted that 10% offer for SO would be fair.

**Should it be mandatory for developers to offer Shared Ownership?**



**Do you need support with shared ownership**



- ➔ The most common support request was around basic information and advice, such as, signposting and awareness of opportunities, early stage support in discussions with developers, understanding of the SO process and timescales.
- ➔ Financial and legal advice to navigate the complex and costly nature of shared ownership arrangements.
- ➔ Communities feel the current process is so complex they need hands-on expert support to guide through the various stages.



# Community Benefit Funding (CBF) and Shared Ownership – Survey Findings

*This report outlines findings from a survey on Community Benefit Funding (CBF) and shared ownership based on 63 responses from DTAS Members.*

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## Introduction:

As Scotland moves away from fossil fuels and towards addressing climate change, there is set to be a monumental increase in renewable energy generation and associated developments such as battery storage, grid developments, and carbon capture. This dubbed ‘renewables revolution’ will bring with it immense opportunity and wealth, however questions remain as to who will benefit and if communities across the country will have any agency in these decisions.

[Community Benefit Funds \(CBF\)](#) and [Shared Ownership \(SO\)](#) mechanisms resulting from, mainly, onshore and offshore wind energy as well as other technologies provides a huge opportunity for communities to secure financial stability and control within a landscape of reduced and piecemeal funding. Given this opportunity it's no surprise that CBF and SO have been recurring topics of conversation and debate both within the DTAS network and the wider sector. These are complex topics and there is a variety of opinion across the DTAS membership with regards to how well communities are currently being served. The core question at the centre of this debate is how to strike a balance between an ongoing prioritisation of local control and funding, and an equitable distribution of funding and opportunities regionally or nationally.

Against this backdrop of challenges and opportunities, a coalition of community sector organisations – Development Trusts Association Scotland, Community Energy Scotland, Community Land Scotland, Scottish Communities Finance - have formed the [Scottish Community Coalition on Energy](#) to issue several calls for action on behalf of communities across Scotland. This coalition work has resulted in a series of published papers and calls to action seeking to secure a fair energy deal for Scottish communities.

**As part of this work in December 2024 DTAS conducted a member-wide survey to inform our response to the [Scottish Government’s Community Benefits from Net Zero Energy Developments Consultation](#). The survey focused on assessing DTAS Members’ involvement with and views on CBF and shared ownership SO.**

The survey was developed and circulated prior to the consultation questions being officially published; while there is significant overlap with the consultation, the survey alone was not sufficient to cover all parts of the consultation. For this reason, a member-only event was held in March 2025 to gather opinions from those who had not completed the survey and stimulate targeted discussion of consultation questions. The event broadly covered the themes of 1) Equity and Distribution of CBF and 2) Decision Making, Governance, and Use of CBF. A summary of the event can be found Annexed to

this report (Annexe A). Following this event, a poll was sent with further space to comment on specific consultation questions and give opinions on consultation statements. The results of this short poll can also be found in Annexe A.

## Overview of Responses and Methodology:

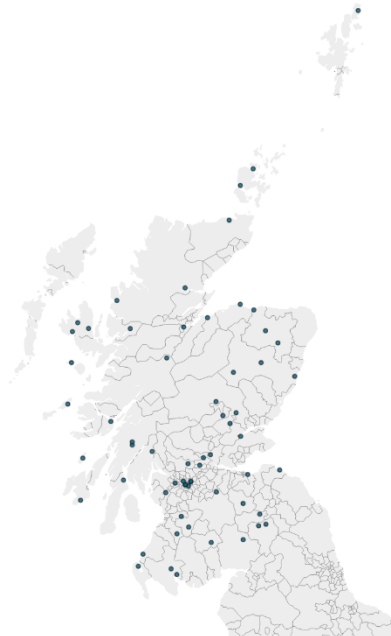
Responses to the survey were collected via Microsoft forms and respondents were limited to one response per organisation. Respondents had the choice to remain anonymous, however, their organisation was named for us to understand the geographic and the urban, rural, small town, and island spread. The survey included a mixture of multiple choice and open-ended questions. Open ended questions were coded by several researchers within DTAS using inductive coding methods. Multiple choice questions were analysed on Excel using basic quantitative analysis methods. Local Authority and the [6-fold Scottish Urban Rural Classification](#) based-on organisation's postcodes were used as descriptive indicators for analysis.

There **were 63 responses to the survey**, out of 350 DTAS members. Constituting a response rate of 18%. With an almost even split between those that receive CBF and those that do not.

The responses were widely spread geographically, covering **20 out of 32** local authorities, with a good distribution between East and West coasts. The highest concentration of responses came from **Highland (17%)** and **Argyll and Bute (13%)** council areas. See below figure.

## Community Benefit Fund Survey Respondents

64 DTAS Members answered the CBF Survey sent in November 2024



Map data: © Open Door Logistics • Created with Datawrapper

*Figure 1- Geographic Spread of Survey Responses*

**Most responses (68%) came from rural groups, 46% from remote rural areas SURC 6, and 22% from accessible rural areas SURC 5.** There were 10 responses from island communities, making up 16% of all responses.

On the other hand, **only 16% of responses came from urban areas** – 13% from Large urban areas SURC 1, and 3% from other urban areas SURC 2. Most urban responses came from **Glasgow City** council area. Finally, 15% of responses came from members based in Accessible and Remote Small Towns.

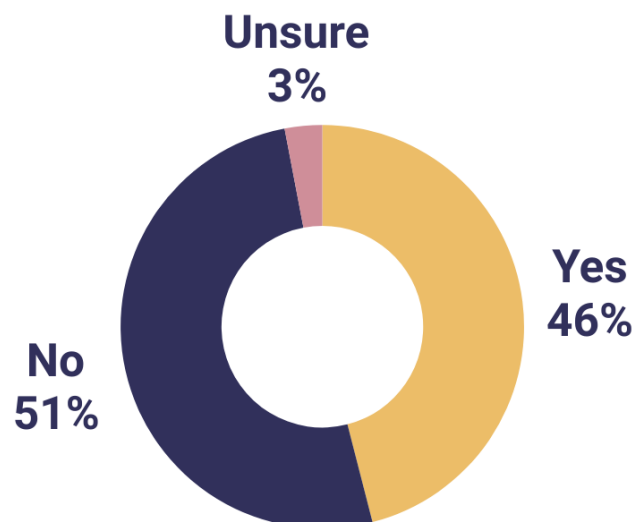
**When compared to the wider DTAS membership, the response rate for this survey heavily skewed towards rural areas.** According to data collected on DTAS Membership in 2023, 44% of DTAS members are based in Accessible and Remote Rural Areas, 33% in Large and Other Urban areas, and 24% in Accessible and Remote Small Towns.

## Community Benefit Funding:

### Overview of CBF Amounts, Source, and Split

Overall, there was an even split between respondents who receive CBF and those who do not. Two respondents were unaware of whether their organisation received CBF. See below graph.

### Do You Receive CBF?



*Figure 2- Do you receive CBF responses pie chart*

#### **Rurality and CBF distribution:**

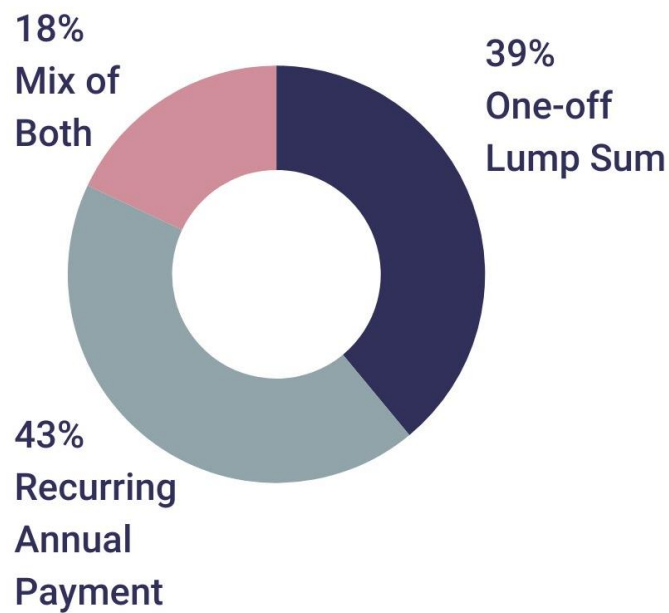
Respondents from rural areas were most likely to be in receipt of CBF, with 64% from Accessible Rural Areas and 55% of Remote Rural receiving CBF. Interestingly, despite all respondents from island communities being classified as remote rural (SURC 6) only 27% of them were in receipt of CBF.

30% of development trusts based in small towns receive community benefits.

DTAS members from urban areas were less likely to be in receipt of community benefits with just 10% having access to this source of funding.

**Of those that receive CBF:**

### Method of Receiving CBF



*Figure 3- Method of Receiving CBF Pie Chart*

### **Approximate Amounts (£):**

Respondents to the survey reported a **huge range in CBF received per annum**, with the minimum coming in at **£1,500** and the maximum at **£600,000**. The average CBF received by development trusts was **£87,986**. These values closely align with the information on CBF received in the DTAS 2023 members survey.

Some development trusts commented that their levels of CBF fluctuate each year due to the funds being run by local authorities or being based on wider regional funds, meaning the communities are unsure of exact figures.

On average, remote rural areas have the largest CBF monies each year with £131,792 followed by remote small towns with £100,000.



## Source of CBF:

*Respondents had the option to select from various sources of CBF: Onshore Renewables (developer owned), Onshore Renewables (community owned), Offshore Renewables, Transmissions, and Other.*

- **86%** of development trusts received their CBF from **onshore renewables owned by developers**.
- 7% of respondents noted that their CBF came from their own community owned onshore development.
- 4% noted fish farms being their source.

There were no responses from groups who receive CBF from offshore installations, or transmission infrastructure.

## Fairness of Current Model

In response to the question **‘do you think the CBF model in Scotland is fair?’** there was extremely minimal support for the current system, with most participants answering no or unsure. See below Graph:

### Do you think the CBF model in Scotland is Fair?

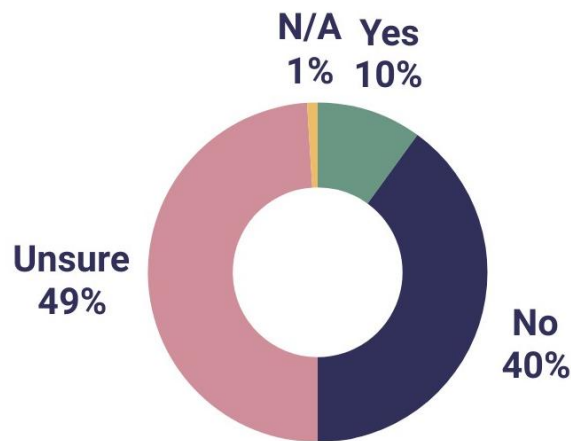


Figure 4- Fairness of Current CBF Model Pie Chart

In terms of responses by those who receive CBF and those who do not, groups in receipt of CBF were marginally more likely to say that they were unsure or that the model is fair. Participants who do not receive CBF tended more strongly towards stating the current model was unfair or expressed more uncertainty around it. See below table:

| Do you think the CBF model is Fair? | Receiving CBF | NOT receiving CBF |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Yes                                 | 10%           | 6%                |
| No                                  | 34%           | 47%               |
| Unsure                              | 55%           | 47%               |

Table 1- Fairness of CBF Model by CBF Receivers/Non-CBF Receivers

## **Rurality and Fairness:**

Given such a small number of respondents answered ‘yes’ to the question of fairness there was no strong discernible geographical divide. However, Remote Rural respondents were marginally less likely to say that the model was fair (only 3%). Of those, no island communities thought the model was fair.

There were some observable trends among those who answered no and unsure. The responses from rural communities were more likely to be “unsure” on the fairness of the model than a categorical “no”. **Those from urban or town contexts were more likely to say the model was unfair.**

Overall, even those who answered yes to the questions of fairness expressed concerns in their comments which highlight very similar issues around fairness to those who answered “no” or “unsure”, suggesting that their “yes” comes with caveats.

The most common theme in comments, from those responding in any way, was around the process, with a focus on issues with transparency, governance and accessibility. It’s also evident that although the current good practice guidance explicitly states that CBFs are not intended to replace or act as compensation for disruption during construction or operational phases, or any detriment to land/property values, many respondents do in fact view them as such.

## **Summary of themes:**

**One of the most recurring themes was access to CBF and how access is prioritised.**

**Access to CBFs:** some responses reflected a desire to distribute CBFs only to communities directly affected by renewable developments. These respondents were largely from rural communities and were in receipt of CBF. Rural communities view this funding as one of the few funds they can access to address the impact of these developments.

On the other hand, urban members reflected on the fact that their communities may be experiencing multiple deprivation and issues such as fuel poverty but lack the recourse to CBFs to combat that. Reflecting on inequity of distribution one respondent used the phrase “accident of geography” to describe how neighbouring communities can be in

or out of a CBF area for various reasons, despite potentially being in sight of a development, or experiencing impacts from construction traffic.

### Other themes:

- **Capacity of communities:** several respondents raised the issues of some communities not having the capacity to access these schemes, and that some communities might miss out as a result.
- **Process:** many comments reflected a deep disappointment with the current process, stating it was not transparent enough, could be arbitrary, too complicated, a “lottery”, too prescriptive, heavily developer-led and dependent on the developer. Despite this some noted a positive side to CBFs in that it grants communities security of income from year to year.
- **Regional and National Distribution:** views were divided on the issue of whether funds should be spent locally or in some form of regional/national distribution. The survey delves deeper into this issue in section 5.
- **CBFs as compensation:** there were several comments which indicated that respondents thought CBFs were essential as compensation for communities or individual households in closest proximity to developments.
- **CBF rate:** a couple of respondents suggested it was the rate p MW in particular which was unfair.

### How to Make it Fairer:

- The **most frequent suggestion was to reform the rate per MW**, with some suggesting shifting to a rate proportional to revenue from the renewable scheme as well as increasing the current per MW rate.
- Several suggestions involved **strengthening governance and delivery processes**, with less leeway for developers to dictate, and potentially using an existing body (such as DTAS) to distribute funding. One respondent suggested using Local Place Plans (LPPs) to prioritise where CBFs be spent.
- Some respondents gave suggestions on a **possible local/national split, or different ways to allocate CBFs** – for example based on population rather than geographical area.

### Mandatory vs. Voluntary Arrangements:

There was overwhelming support for making the distribution of CBF mandatory. See below graph for a full breakdown of responses:

## Should CBF be Mandatory?

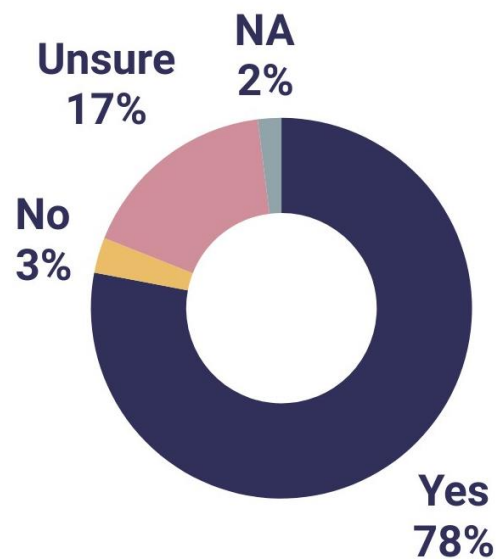


Figure 5- Should CBF be Mandatory? Pie Chart

### Responses and Rurality:

**Remote Rural respondents were least likely to vote yes (66%)**, with more in these areas responding unsure (31%). Those in other areas were more likely to vote yes (100% in accessible rural respondents, and 75% in large urban respondents). From the 11 island respondents, 73% voted yes.

Of those who responded to the question about which forms of renewables should be included (23), **74% thought that all forms of renewables should be included**, with just under half of those also including transmission networks.

Of those who answered what amount the CBFs should be set at, **the highest response (39%) was that the rate should be set by the community**. 17% thought that the current rate should be kept, and 17% thought it should increase to £7000 p/Mw. 13% thought it should be a proportion of revenue.

For those who said that CBFs should be mandatory, when asked why, the most common theme in response was that CBFs deliver consistent community funding. Other reasons include to avoid the appearance of bribery (if CBFs are discretionary), it counters the extractive economy by returning wealth to communities, fairness, it empowers community and improves governance.

## Summary of themes

Those who responded yes often had several caveats that must accompany a mandatory scheme, namely:

- Improved guidance.
- Third sector management.
- Nationally consistent.
- Less prescriptive.
- Foster better community relationships.

Common themes for those who answered “no” to CBFs being mandatory:

- It would be seen as a tax and disincentivise investment.
- It may reduce flexibility of how funds can be used.

Those who answered “unsure” were often looking for more information, acknowledging the complexity of the decision, were concerned about unintended consequences, or preferred a focus on shared ownership or better guidance.

## Support Needed with CBF:

Almost half of all respondents (40%) stated they **would like more support** with CBF in their communities. Groups in **small towns** were more likely to request support than those in **rural or urban areas**:

- **Accessible small towns:** 67% said they needed more support.
- **Remote small towns:** 75% said they needed more support.

## Support and Access to CBF:

- Most groups that **want more support do not currently receive any CBF**. **56%** of those not in receipt of CBF requested more support, with only 13% saying they did not.
- Among those who receive CBF only **24%** said they needed more support, with **41%** saying they did not.

## Types of Support Requested

The most common request was for support for **strategic and collaborative use of CBF across regions**, ensuring benefits reach those who **receive CBF and those who do not**. Other key requests included:

- **Increased awareness and information on opportunities:** Respondents highlighted the need for clear, accessible information on how to apply for and manage CBF. Many communities were unaware of existing opportunities or unsure how to access them.
- **Impartial guidance:** Some communities felt they lacked objective, independent advice on whether a development was in their best interest and how best to engage with developers. While it is not in the scope of the consultation to assess whether developments are in the best interest of the communities, the lack of information felt by communities can be disempowering and puts them at a disadvantage when negotiating with developers. This information and understanding gap must be addressed.
- **Early-stage support for involvement in negotiations:** Many communities felt they were engaging with developers too late in the process, limiting their influence and ability to secure favourable agreements.

These findings reflect a need for **early-stage support, clear signposting, and more equitable CBF distribution**, especially among groups **not currently in receipt of CBF**.

All Types of Support Mentioned:

| Support Type   | %   |
|--|-----|
| Strategic, long-term use to build community capacity, infrastructure, and resilience. Ensuring that CBF is used effectively to support long-term community goals   | 19% |
| Providing communities with unbiased information about the benefits, risks, and opportunities of CBF  | 16% |
| Early-stage support for negotiating and securing arrangements  | 16% |
| Prioritising CBF for projects that tackle climate change and promote sustainable energy.   | 16% |
| Improved communication between community councils, local authorities, developers, and third parties. Encouraging collaboration and transparency in CBF management. | 13% |
| Ensuring that communities not directly hosting developments can still benefit.   | 9%  |
| Developing systems to prevent a few individuals from controlling CBF decisions.  | 9%  |
| Financial advice   | 9%  |
| Prioritising compensation and benefits for directly affected communities.  | 9%  |
| Tailored support for urban communities   | 9%  |
| Encouraging communities to work together for greater impact – collective community voice   | 9%  |
| Capacity, governance, and administration – core support  | 9%  |
| Establishing standardised rules to ensure fair distribution.   | 3%  |
| Simplified processes   | 3%  |

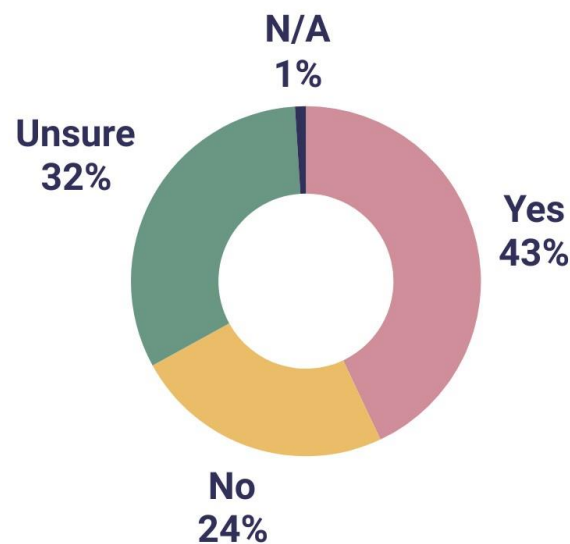
Table 2 - Types of Support Needed CBF



## National and Regional Distribution of CBF:

Almost half of all development trusts surveyed expressed support for distribution of CBF to a more regional or national fund. See below graph.

**Are you supportive of the idea of a portion of CBFs being allocated to National or Regional Wealth Funds?**



*Figure 6 - National/Regional Distribution of CBF Pie Chart*

### **Support for Regional/National Distribution and Rurality:**

Those in Accessible Small Towns were most likely to express support for a national wealth fund – with 67% responding yes to this question. Following that, 63% of those in Large Urban Areas support the regional/national distribution of CBF.

Those in Remote Rural Areas were the least likely to support any form of regional/national distribution, with only 32% expressing support and 43% answering no to wanting a national and regional split.

### **Support for Regional/National Distribution for those with and without CBF:**

- 56% of respondents who do not receive CBF express support for a national/regional wealth fund.
- Compared to only 28% of respondents who receive CBF and support such a fund.

Both groups of respondents, those who receive and those who do not receive CBF, had significant responses indicating they were unsure of supporting this initiative. 34% and 28% respectively.

### Summary of Common Themes by Answer:

#### For those who answered Yes:

- **Preference for a Regional Fund:** A regional distribution model was favoured for its ability to pool resources for larger projects, ensure fairer access for lower-capacity communities, and promote collaboration among areas while retaining more local control.
- **Support for a National Fund:** Some backed a national fund, provided it had clear investment priorities and did not reduce funding for communities closest to developments. A mixed model, with national oversight and regional investment targets, was suggested.
- **Local Control Mechanisms in a Tiered Approach:** A tiered structure was proposed, balancing near-neighbour, regional, and national allocations while ensuring local areas remained well-funded.
- **Focus on Disadvantaged or Lower-Capacity Communities:** Equitable distribution was seen to support deprived areas and lower-capacity community groups.
- **Avoiding Local Authority Involvement:** Concerns were raised that local authorities might absorb CBFs into general budgets, reducing community control and transparency.
- **Need for More Information:** Many felt a clear framework was needed to define how a regional/national fund would be allocated, managed, and governed.
- **Core Funding for Community Organisations:** A portion of funds could provide long-term support for community organisations, covering staffing, governance, and capacity building.
- Examples from Norway and Orkney were cited as potential models for effective fund distribution.

### Common Themes for Those who answered No:

- **Fear of Local Funds Being Absorbed by Government:** A primary concern was that a national or regional fund would result in government control, reducing transparency and redirecting funds away from communities.
- **Loss of Community Control:** CBFs were seen as direct compensation for local impacts, and respondents feared centralization would take decision-making away from affected communities.
- **Preference for a Regional Approach Over a National One:** Some who opposed a national fund were open to a regional model, provided it remained independent of government and safeguarded local priorities.
- **Concern Over Rising Energy Costs:** Rather than redistributing funds, some respondents argued that efforts should focus on lowering energy costs for local communities.
- **Focus on disadvantaged communities should not undermine local impact:** While acknowledging the need for **wider access**, respondents stressed that **communities directly impacted by developments should remain the priority.**

### Common Themes for Those who Answered Unsure:

- **Mechanism to Retain Local Control Over Funds:** uncertainty over how local decision-making would be protected in a regional/national model.
- **Funds Should Primarily Benefit Impacted Communities:** directly affected communities should have priority, but some saw value in limited regional collaboration where appropriate.
- **Decision Should Depend on the Size of the Fund:** The scale of available CBFs would influence whether a regional approach was feasible, with smaller funds best kept local.
- **Support for a More Regional Approach Over a National One:** A regional model was more popular than a national one, provided it was transparent and locally accountable.
- **Need for Strong Financial Governance and Transparency:** to ensure community-driven decision-making.
- **Concerns Over Bureaucracy:** must not add unnecessary complexity or delay access to funds.
- **Offshore Potential for Wider Distribution:** Offshore developments could offer opportunities for broader benefit-sharing.

- **Need for Further Consultation and Information:** More direct community engagement and clearer details on fund distribution models were needed before respondents could decide.
- **Targeting disadvantaged communities:** Some supported a mechanism that allows communities not near developments to access funding, particularly in areas of economic deprivation.
- **Strategic Use of CBFs:** A regional approach could allow more coordinated investment in infrastructure and long-term community development.

These responses indicate a deep divide on the issue, with **concerns over local control, fair distribution, and financial transparency** being central themes.

## DTAS Support Needed to Address Equity of Distribution:

In addition to asking for views on the **national and regional distribution of CBFs**, respondents were invited to suggest other mechanisms that **DTAS could support or implement** to ensure a fair and effective distribution of funds.

A key theme that emerged was the **importance of Upskilling and Capacity Building in community organisations**, mentioned by **17% of respondents**. Many felt that a **lack of financial expertise, governance knowledge, and administrative support** limits community organisations' ability to manage and distribute funds effectively.

Specific suggestions included:

- **Core funding for staffing costs to reduce the burden on volunteers.**
- **Training in governance and financial management** to improve community-led decision-making.
- **Better education on the renewable energy development process**, so communities understand how CBFs are generated and how to maximise their benefits.

The second most common theme was **targeting CBF funds for energy and climate initiatives (14% of responses)**. Many respondents saw **CBFs as an opportunity to invest directly in local sustainability projects**, such as **energy efficiency programs, community renewable energy generation, and climate adaptation measures**.

The table below outlines the full range of themes identified in responses.

| Theme  | % of Total Responses |
|--|----------------------|
| <b>Upskilling and capacity building of community organisations</b> – Providing training, governance support, and financial expertise to ensure communities can manage funds effectively. | <b>17%</b>           |
| <b>NA – Unsure</b>   | <b>14%</b>           |
| <b>CBF targeted use – ENERGY and climate</b> – Ensuring CBFs are used to fund local renewable energy projects, climate resilience initiatives, and carbon reduction schemes.             | <b>14%</b>           |
| <b>Sharing and pooling of resources – % to national/regional funds</b> – Encouraging a model where a portion of funds are  | <b>12%</b>           |

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| allocated to regional or national community funds to promote wider benefits.   |            |
| <b>Better use of existing community structures (e.g., community anchor organisations, Development Trusts)</b> – Utilising established local organisations to manage and distribute funds more effectively. | <b>12%</b> |
| <b>Lobby for simplified, consistent, and transparent processes</b> – Advocating for standardised, clear guidelines to make CBF distribution fairer and more accessible.                                    | <b>10%</b> |
| <b>Decentralise decision-making to local community and representative bodies (e.g., DTAS)</b> – Ensuring decision-making is <b>led by local communities</b> rather than external bodies.                   | <b>7%</b>  |
| <b>Signposting – impartial information on what CBFs are, how to access them, and where to find support</b> – Providing clearer guidance for communities unfamiliar with the process.                       | <b>7%</b>  |
| <b>Advocate for Community/Shared Ownership</b> – Promoting more community ownership of energy assets to ensure long-term financial benefits for local groups.  | <b>7%</b>  |
| <b>Community-driven, flexible, and strategic use of CBFs</b> – Allowing communities to determine how best to use funds based on their specific needs.  | <b>7%</b>  |
| <b>CBFs should only be used and decided on at a hyper-local level</b> – Opposing regional or national pooling of funds and advocating for all funds to be retained within the immediate community.         | <b>7%</b>  |
| <b>Avoid government/local authority involvement in distribution of funds</b> – Concerns that government-led processes may reduce community control over how funds are used.                                | <b>5%</b>  |
| <b>Advocate for new investment models (e.g., Community Investment Trusts)</b> – Exploring alternative mechanisms to manage and grow community wealth sustainably.  | <b>7%</b>  |
| <b>Transparency</b> – Ensuring CBFs are managed openly, with clear reporting on where funds are allocated and why.   | <b>5%</b>  |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <p><b>Potential of offshore renewables to be developed more for communities</b> – Encouraging greater community involvement in offshore wind and marine energy projects.</p>                      | <p>5%</p> |
| <p><b>Other</b> – A variety of additional suggestions that did not fall under a specific category.</p>  | <p>7%</p> |
| <p><b>Independent funding bodies (e.g., SLF, National Lottery) to distribute CBFs</b> – Proposing that CBFs be managed by independent organisations rather than developers or local councils.</p> | <p>2%</p> |
| <p><b>More local authority involvement in fund management and distribution</b> – A minority opinion supporting increased local government oversight.</p>  | <p>2%</p> |

Table 3 - Types of Support Needed (Equity of Distribution)

## Shared Ownership

The second half the survey explored shared ownership arrangements.

### Overview of Existing Arrangements:

The below graph outlines what percentage of respondents have or are in the process of securing SO, have explored but not pursued SO, and have never explored SO.

### Do you have a shared ownership arrangement?

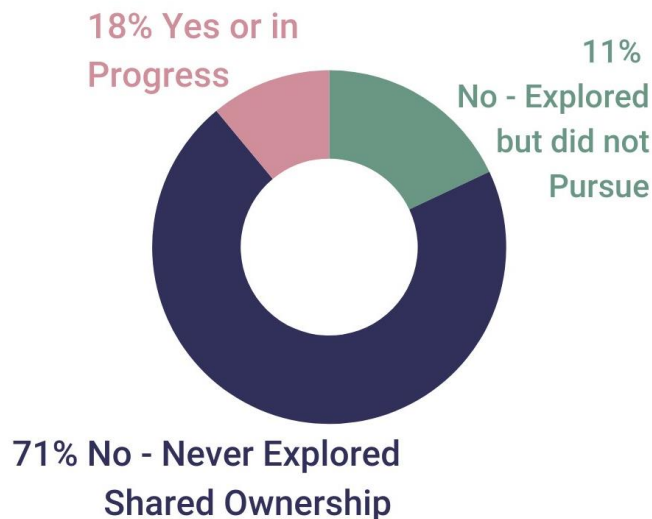


Figure 7- Shared Ownership Arrangements Pie Chart

### S.O and Rurality:

The survey showed that the opportunities for shared ownership are mainly in remote rural areas. With 21% of development trusts from these areas engaged in shared ownership arrangements and 18% declining or choosing not to pursue arrangements.

Island communities have also had exposure to shared ownership with 18% engaged in arrangements and 18% declining offers from developers.

Urban development trusts surveyed were the least likely to have access to shared ownership with only 11% engaging in an arrangement and 77% having never explored this approach.



### **Details of Arrangement:**

The shared ownership arrangements described by groups were either through a shared revenue approach, with the groups receiving monies through the profit of the turbine, or through equity in the ownership of the onshore development.

### **Progress of Arrangements:**

The DTs surveyed conveyed a wide spectrum of progress in their shared ownership journey. Over half (55%) of respondents that answered yes to having/exploring a shared ownership arrangement are in the early stages of this process, particularly in the negotational stage with developers. One respondent noted that their process has entirely halted due to difficulties liaising with developer.

Comments from several groups suggested that negotiation with developers has not been straightforward:

- There were comments made regarding the additional capacity needed when negotiating with developers to ensure the community receives a fair deal. Similarly, another development trust commented that more support was needed in the negotiation stage.
- To receive the monies from arrangements, development trusts are creating new legal entities, further contributing to the use of capacity and resource to setting up shared ownership with communities.
- In some cases, negotiations stalled with developers despite the community's interest in pursuing shared ownership.
- Several development trusts referred to the financial implications of their shared ownership agreements with commercial loans needed to secure communities' stake.

### **Common reasons for groups without shared ownership arrangements:**

Respondents who explored but declined shared ownership noted the financial risk and uncertainty about the return of investment as the main reason for not pursuing. The other key driver was difficulty negotiating with developers.

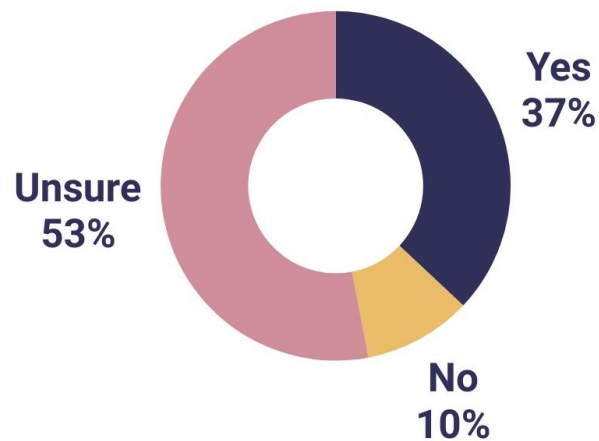
Over 70% of respondents expressed that their development trusts have not explored shared ownership. When asked why this is, nearly **half (43%) expressed that there has been no opportunity in their community to access shared ownership**. Other reasons included:

- Limited knowledge was also a popular reason for not engaging with shared ownership, showing the lack of awareness of the benefits and opportunities which this mechanism can provide.
- Several communities noted that shared ownership wasn't explored due to use of their own community owned renewable energy installation.
- Other reasons included that having a stake in nearby renewable projects wasn't something they thought they would be eligible for due to their location in remote rural spots or in urbanised areas.
- With clear plans and strategies for their development trust, shared ownership is not a current priority for some communities.

## Mandatory Shared Ownership:

There was minimal opposition to the idea that it should be mandatory for developers to offer shared ownership opportunities to communities. The survey found no discernible pattern for this question in relation to receiving community benefits. See below graph:

### Should it be mandatory for developers to offer shared ownership?



*Figure 8 - Should it be mandatory for developers to offer shared ownership? Pie Chart*

Those who responded that it should be mandatory for developers to offer shared ownership were invited to say which technologies this should be applicable to - onshore/offshore/transmissions or all and provide more details on the percentage to be offered and the definition of 'offer'.

- 38% thought that it should apply to only onshore developments.
- Following that 31% thought that it should apply to all developments (offshore, onshore and transmissions).

In terms of agreed equity, up to 10% was mentioned as being a fair percentage for communities.

### Aspects of Mandatory Shared Ownership:

Comments from those that responded yes to a form of mandatory shared ownership also included several specific suggestions on what that could look like and what guidelines would need to be in place. For example:

- **Community Benefit and Compensation:** Improving infrastructure to mitigate impact of projects, helping communities directly, investing in infrastructure near developments such as active travel routes, housing, and broadband.
- **Environmental and Land Use Considerations:** need for scrutiny in how the land is treated when constructing onshore developments.
- **Ensure Shared Ownership is Fair and Equitable:** respondents asserted the need for shared ownership to be fairer. In terms of investing in energy projects, free carries and a lack of minimum investment in shared ownership were both suggested. Another comment raised was whether communities should own their own onshore turbine rather than receiving a portion of ownership or annual profits.
- **Transparency and Informed Decision Making:** given the complexity of negotiating arrangements, communities referred to a need for independent guidance and support to allow them to make informed decisions and secure the best deal.

Many expressed that they didn't have the knowledge to comment on how mandatory shared ownership should be envisioned and any form of guidance would require extensive deliberation and co-design.

#### **Comments from those who do not support mandatory shared ownership:**

A minority of responses were against making it mandatory for developers to offer shared ownership. These responses expressed that shared ownership shouldn't be mandatory because the mechanism is not appropriate for all private developers or all communities.

#### **Comments from those who were unsure or undecided:**

- For those who were unsure about shared ownership being compulsory, half (50%) of development trusts referred to needing more information and gaining a better understanding of shared ownership. Communities want to have a better conception of shared ownership scheme designs and viability whilst some called for firmer guidance in this space.
- Similarly, 27% of respondents for this question asserted that the economic viability and risk involved in developing an arrangement. Often with large financial stakes being needed from communities, there lies uncertainty in the rewards of arrangements. One suggestion to improve this was for developers to

increase incentives for communities to invest and make known the benefits of engaging with this ownership model.

- Several development trusts made their scepticism known of mandatory shared ownership. There were concerns that developers would encroach on community owned land.
- Other comments related to the need for capacity building in development trusts for effective ownership to exist. With shared ownership requiring financial, organisational and governance capabilities for communities, there needs to be more support for communities to meet these needs. Additionally, the need for enhanced community trust and project support was noted with communities making known their commitment to shared ownership and fulfilling their role as owners.

## Support Needed with Shared Ownership:

Participants were asked whether they needed additional support with shared ownership arrangements, and if so what type of support was needed. See below graph for a breakdown of answers:

### Do you need support with shared ownership

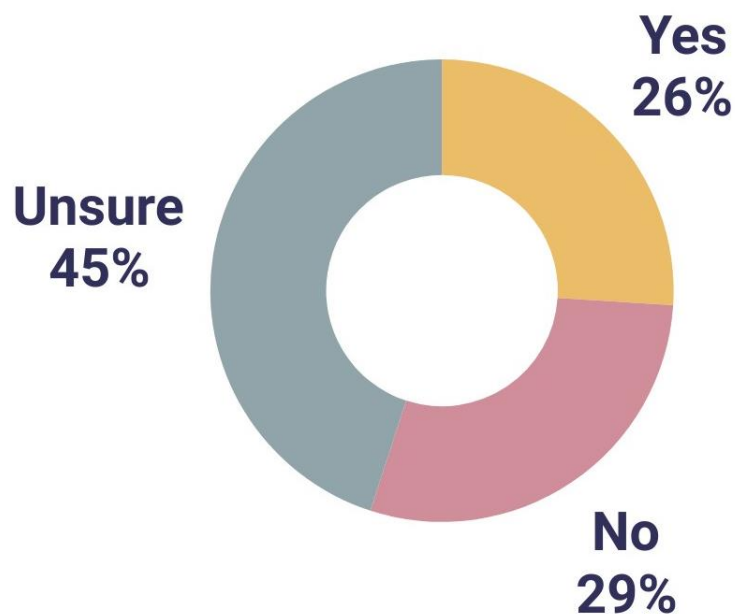


Figure 9 - Support with SO Needed Pie Chart

### Types of Support Required:

Comments from those who answered yes and unsure to the question of if more support was needed shed light on the types of support most required. On average, development trusts detailed two different aspects of support that was needed in shared ownership.

#### 1. Awareness, Information, Signposting

- Almost half of the responses (46%) mentioned **basic information and advice** on shared ownership.
- More information and an awareness of the general principles, the possibilities of shared ownership models and the pros and cons were all suggested.
- Understanding **route maps and timescales** was also mentioned as an important aspect of additional support.

- Signposting to **area specific shared ownership opportunities** and existing resources was also mentioned several times.

## 2. Technical Advice, Hands-on Support

- **Financial** and **legal advice** were another two aspects which stood out for communities given the costly and complex nature of creating arrangements.
- **Hands-on expert support** throughout the shared ownership process was also noted by 25% of respondents.
- **Risk** and **funding support** were other mentioned aspect of ways which communities can be better supported.

## Inclusion of Wider Communities in Shared Ownership Arrangements:

In the vein of understanding the equity of distribution of these opportunities, and the appetite for expanding access we asked participants if they supported the idea of communities not next to renewables developments being included in shared ownership offers. See the below graph for a breakdown of responses:

Are you supportive of communities not next to developments being included in shared ownership offers?

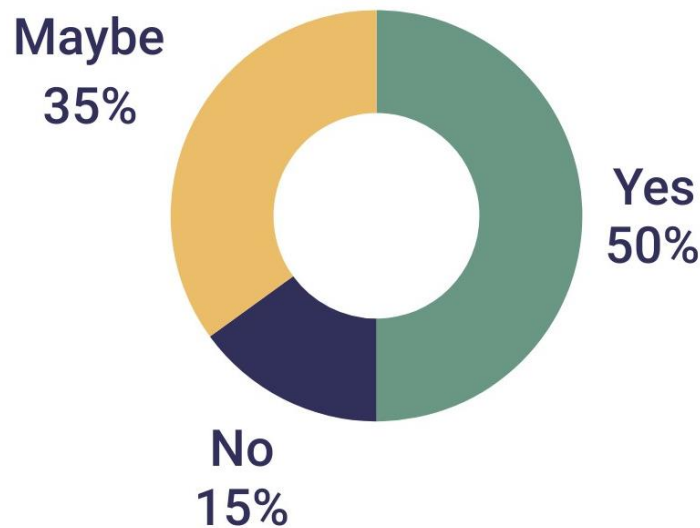


Figure 10 - SO Opportunities Distribution Pie Chart

### Responses by Geography:

- A minority of respondents answered no to this question, 89% of that minority came from groups in rural areas (SURC 5 and 6). **Notably 0% of groups in urban areas and accessible small towns answered no to this question.**
- Similarly, an overwhelming majority (90%) of those that responded maybe to this question were based in rural areas.
- Of those that responded yes to this question, with 23% coming from large urban areas and 29% coming from remote rural areas.
- Yes, was by far the most common response for those in urban areas and small towns.





The full breakdown of responses by SURC can be found below:

Are you supportive of communities not next to developments being included in shared ownership offers?

| SURC                      | Yes  | No  | Maybe |
|---------------------------|------|-----|-------|
| 1 - Large Urban Areas     | 88%  | 0%  | 13%   |
| 2 - Other Urban Areas     | 100% | 0%  | 0%    |
| 3 - Accessible Small Town | 83%  | 0%  | 17%   |
| 4 - Remote Small Town     | 75%  | 25% | 0%    |
| 5 - Accessible Rural      | 43%  | 21% | 36%   |
| 6 - Remote Rural          | 32%  | 18% | 50%   |

Table 4 - SO opportunities distribution and SURC

Some responses indicated **confusion between shared ownership and community benefit funds (CBFs)**, which limited the depth of analysis.

Themes from Respondents Who Answered ‘Yes’ (50%)

- **Some communities are unlikely to ever be near a significant development (19%):** Many respondents felt that shared ownership should not be limited to host communities because some areas, particularly urban communities, will never have renewable developments nearby due to geographical constraints.
- **Needed for equity and fairness (16%):** There was a strong feeling that opportunities should be made available more broadly to ensure fair access across different regions.
- **Requires further investment and support (13%):** Many community groups lack the capacity, expertise, and funding to engage in shared ownership projects effectively, there must be financial and administrative support.
- **The design needs further development and should be approached on a case-by-case basis (16%):** Several participants supported expanding access to

shared ownership, but only if designed carefully to account for different community needs.

- **Creates opportunities for larger areas to collaborate (10%):** Some respondents saw shared ownership as a way for multiple communities to pool resources and invest in projects collectively.
- **Should expand to include communities in the vicinity of large developments (6%):** could help mitigate indirect impacts of large-scale renewable projects.
- **Yes, but only for offshore developments (3%)**
- **Yes, but not at the expense of local host communities (3%):** There should be a mechanism ensuring that the communities most affected by development remain the priority and benefits aren't diluted.
- Widening participation could make it easier for communities to **raise capital and invest in larger shares** of renewable developments. (3%)
- **Yes, but developers may not support this (3%)**

#### Themes from Respondents Who Answered 'No' (15%)

- **Any benefits should be kept local to mitigate adverse effects for host communities (44%):** Many viewed shared ownership as compensation for local impact and argued that communities not directly affected should not receive financial benefits. Fearing this could reduce the benefits available to those experiencing disruption.
- **It may lead to conflict between communities and complicate local ownership (22%):** Some worried this could create unnecessary divisions rather than fostering collaboration.
- **More information needed (11%):** A few respondents stated that there was **insufficient clarity** on how wider shared ownership would work in practice.
- **Risk that high-capacity communities will dominate opportunities (11%):** wealthier or better-resourced communities would benefit the most, at the expense of those with lower capacity and fewer financial resources.
- **If non-host communities participate, they should be offered less preferential terms (11%): host communities should always be prioritised,** with non-host communities receiving secondary **opportunities.**

#### Themes from Respondents Who Answered 'Maybe' (35%)

- **More information needed (18%):** Many respondents were open to the idea but stated that they **needed more details before forming a definitive opinion.**
- **If local communities are prioritised (14%)**

- **Decisions should be made case by case basis (9%)**
- **Sceptical of benefits (5%):** Some respondents **questioned whether shared ownership would truly benefit non-host communities.**
- **CBF could reach wider, leaving shared ownership solely for local communities (5%)**
- **Concerns over wasted time if developers reject applications (5%)**
- **Shared ownership should be targeted at disadvantaged communities (5%)**
- **Concerns about financial risks involved (5%)**

## Final Comments

Few respondents left additional comments, but the ones that did revolved around a few core themes: a welcoming of the review of current practice, the need for more of a focus on urban communities, the need to build capacity and upskill communities, the huge opportunity presented by CBFs for community-controlled funding but also the damage it could do to small communities especially if they lost control of this funding.

## Conclusion

This survey has provided valuable insights into the views of development trusts across Scotland regarding shared ownership and community benefit funds from renewable energy technologies. The findings indicate broad support for several key reforms, including the mandatory application of CBF arrangements to all renewable energy projects and the revision of CBF rates, with a preference for these rates to be set by the communities themselves. However, concerns about the fairness and accessibility of the current model, particularly in terms of transparency and governance, were highlighted by many respondents.

A significant majority of DTs have not explored shared ownership opportunities, with only 18% either engaging in or pursuing such arrangements. This suggests a need for greater encouragement and support for communities to take part in shared ownership models. Opinions on the accessibility of CBFs to communities not in proximity to developments were divided, reflecting the complexity of balancing local and regional/national distribution. While some respondents, especially those from accessible small towns and urban areas, expressed strong support for national or regional wealth funds, those in remote rural areas were less convinced, with a notable portion rejecting the idea of redistributing funds in this manner.

The survey also revealed that capacity remains a major barrier to communities' ability to fully engage with and benefit from shared ownership and CBFs. Many respondents stressed the need for more support in terms of staffing, governance, and financial expertise to ensure effective management of funds. There was a clear call for capacity building, including core funding for staffing and training in governance and financial management, as well as greater education on the renewable energy development process.

While there is overwhelming support for reforms to make CBFs more equitable and accessible, there are significant challenges in terms of community capacity and governance. DTAS has a key role to play in providing support, advocacy, and strategic guidance to help communities navigate these challenges and maximise the potential

benefits of renewable energy developments. The survey highlights the need for ongoing collaboration, capacity building, and transparency in ensuring that communities can fully participate in and benefit from these opportunities.