

## Scottish Labour Policy Forum, Manifesto Consultation Initial Response. [See Consultation Document.](#)

### FROM: Development Trust Association Scotland.

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[Development Trust Association Scotland](#) (DTAS) is a member-led organisation that provides direct support and advice to community organisations across Scotland. DTAS represents over 350 development trusts in 31 local authorities. Our [Community Ownership Support Service](#) works with hundreds of community groups both within and outwith DTAS membership to support them in taking assets into community ownership through Community Asset Transfer, Community Right to Buy, and Negotiated Sales. Our [Democratic Finance](#) team works with Community Benefit Societies and Cooperatives both in and out of DTAS membership to raise money locally to take ownership of important community assets and run democratic community-led businesses.

DTAS also produces high quality research and insights, resources, and toolkits to provide a strong and unified voice, often at the highest levels, for our development trust members. [See some of our most recent research here.](#) This response is based on the extensive on the ground experience of DTAS staff, DTAS consultation responses, DTAS members survey, and member discussion events and workshops.

## Key Calls:

**Resourcing and Funding:** These calls cannot be achieved without a **commitment to Fair Funding for the voluntary sector**. See a list of SCVO's complete [Fair Funding asks here](#). Community organisations need core funding for staffing costs, organisational sustainability, access to expert advice and knowledge for them to deliver sustainably and in the long-term for their communities.

## Net Zero and Just Transition

- **Updated Good Practice Principles and Scottish Government targets and ambitions:** Address inconsistency among developers regarding community benefits and shared ownership.
- **Increased Community Benefit Fund (CBF):** Raise CBF benchmark to a minimum of £7,500 per MW and make the provision of CBFs mandatory.
- Framework requiring developers to channel wealth generated from projects into community housing, connectivity, and infrastructure.
- **Credible Shared Ownership Opportunities** supported by community resources and bespoke, affordable financing options.
- **Incentivising 100% Community-Owned Renewable Energy:** funding, upskilling and long-term sustainability.
- **Establish a Scottish Community Wealth Fund (SCWF):** Providing long-term benefit to the whole of Scotland.

## Models of Ownership and Community Wealth Building (CWB)

- Public bodies must integrate CWB principles in policies and strategies, with clearer duties for effective implementation. Granting communities greater control over decisions, including planning, and local procurement.
- Collaboration with community organisations, community action plans, local democratic reform for greater community decision-making power.
- **Community Right to Buy mechanism to establish community-owned businesses.**
- **Update land and asset acquisition processes,** ie CRtB, CAT, and Negotiated Sales. Consider Compulsory Sales Orders.
- **Capacity Building:** Core investment for staffing, governance, and upskilling.
- **Tackling Empty Properties:** Provide support to identify and repurpose derelict properties for regeneration, including the use of compulsory sale orders.
- **Democratic Finance:** Support for community shares and social investment.

- **Facilities Management Post-Acquisition support:** Support for communities saving important assets that were previously publicly owned, especially post-acquisition with maintenance, utilities, and other costs.

## Housing

- **Community-Led Housing Investment:** Provide targeted support for capacity building, staff, expertise, and post-completion management.
- **Addressing Empty Homes:** map and negotiate long-term leases or renovations of derelict properties in collaboration with local authorities.
- **Regulating Second Homes and Short-Term Lets.**
- **Revenue Raising Powers:** Grant communities' control over local taxation, such as council tax and tourism levies, to fund large-scale projects. This will require strong local democratic governance structures and as such should be linked to the Democracy Matters agenda.
- **Equitable Housing Distribution:** Balance housing development across regions to serve underserved rural and island communities.
- **Updated Co-Housing Regulations:** Facilitate co-housing, addressing issues like ageing populations, care shortages, and youth retention. Consider integrating co-housing into local authority housing strategies.

## Net Zero and Just Transition

The response to this theme is informed by DTAS' participation in the Scottish Communities Coalition on Energy alongside Community Energy Scotland, Community Land Scotland, and Scottish Communities Finance. We have developed a paper which includes their 5 key calls to action on Shared Ownership opportunities – [Read the Paper HERE](#).

- **Incentivising Community-Owned Renewable Energy:** [A recent report](#) by Aquatera Ltd on behalf of Point and Sandwick Development Trust found that Community owned wind farms have paid their communities 34 times more than commercial counterparts. Increase support for start-up funding, access to financing such as loans from SNIB and [democratic finance models](#), upskilling of communities to take on these projects, a mechanism to replace feed in tariffs and ensure these projects are financially sustainable and viable.
- Set a target of **1GW of 100% community-owned energy** in Scotland by 2030.
- Provide clear routes and support for communities to buy out or buy in to private renewables developments when they are being **repowered**.
- Further clarification on the Scottish Government's position, targets, and guidance on Community Benefits and Shared Ownership is needed. **Update Good Practise Principles on community benefits and shared ownership of renewables, both onshore and offshore** to address inequalities and lack of consistency among developers regarding their approach to community benefits and shared ownership.
- All new guidance should be informed by engagement with community-led bodies in the communities that host these developments, as well as those typically excluded from receiving benefits (e.g., those in urban centres).
- **Increase uptake of Shared Ownership Opportunities:** It should be mandatory for developers to offer shared ownership in a timely and transparent fashion. Communities must have the time, capacity, resources, and access to affordable and patient finance to evaluate whether such opportunities are appropriate. Need investment into support for communities to navigate the process and negotiate these arrangements.
- Work with the UK Government to **require energy developers to provide community benefit funds**. Current Community Benefit Fund (CBF) should be increased to £7,500 per MW. Updating good practice principles would provide more guidance on developer and community engagement.

- **Commitment from Renewable Energy Developers:** a framework that places **clear responsibilities on developers** to ensure that wealth generated from renewable energy and natural capital is used to **fund housing, connectivity, and infrastructure improvements as part of their projects.**
- **Establish a Scottish Community Wealth Fund (SCWF)** - A Scottish Community Wealth Fund would be akin to a sovereign wealth fund but with revenue ringfenced to support community acquisition of assets (land/buildings/renewables) that will create and sustain long-term community wealth across Scotland. This would NOT require Scottish Government upfront investment; instead it could be seeded with strategic use of Scotwind lease money and the devolved Dormant Assets, and grow over time with a portion of the revenue raised from renewables and transmission developments, alongside ongoing contributions from dormant assets, Scotwind, endowment funds and returns on Community Wealth Fund investment.

## Models of Ownership - Community Wealth Building

DTAS supports the CWB agenda and principles, recognising their relevance to community organisations. However, there is a **lack of clarity around implementation**. **DTAS supports placing a clearer duty on the public sector to embed CWB principles in policies, plans, and strategies, to provide a strong foundation for implementation.**

### Issues identified by DTAS members regarding CWB:

- **Lack of awareness of CWB initiatives at the local level:** Local Authorities need to collaborate with community organisations to develop community action plans. Communities often feel they lack influence over the CWB agenda. Increased engagement by public bodies, especially local authorities, is required to better shape local priorities.
- **Linking CWB to local democratic reform:** Connecting CWB to local democratic reforms, such as the Democracy Matters 2 Agenda, would provide the foundation for local economic democracy that communities are asking for. This would give communities greater control over decisions, including planning, local procurement, and funding for specific projects like housing.

Inclusive ownership is at the heart of the development trust movement. DTAS asks on how Community Wealth Building can better support community owned businesses, assets and facilities:

- **Community Right to Buy Essential Businesses:** Many communities have in recent years bought out their local shop, pub or post office to preserve local services and employment, where losing these would have a detrimental impact on a community. A community right to buy these essential local businesses would increase community ownership and preserve employment. These businesses could be owned as trading subsidiaries of development trusts or developed into social enterprises or cooperatives. Careful thought would need to be given to appropriate funding, whether public funding or community bonds or social investment.
- **Updated Processes for Acquiring Land and Assets:** either through Community Asset Transfer, Community Right to Buy, or negotiated sales. Additionally, community right to buy legislation doesn't reflect the nature and challenges faced by urban communities seeking to secure land.

- **Capacity building for community organisations:** Communities require support with business planning, governance, and financial planning, particularly in areas of disadvantage. They also need adequate resources to deliver long-term goals. Core funding for staffing and administrative costs is essential, as projects cannot succeed without skilled people.
- **Support tackling empty properties:** administrative and financial support is needed so community groups can identify owners of empty and derelict properties often blocking regeneration efforts, particularly in town centres and high streets. Consideration of **compulsory sale orders** could be a powerful tool to bring land/buildings back into uses which contribute to CWB. Examples of town centre regeneration include [Midsteeples Quarter in Dumfries and Galloway](#).
- **Democratic finance for sustainable businesses:** Alternative financing initiatives, such as community share offers, should be encouraged. This ensures businesses are not grant-reliant and can achieve long-term financial sustainability.
- **Facilities management support post-acquisition:** while there is some support for communities taking on assets, or breaking ground on new projects, once a project is up and running support can be scarce. DTAS operates a facilities management service which has been used by over 70 community groups, 51 of which have been for post-acquisition support, addressing challenges like maintenance, energy efficiency, utilities, and general facilities management.

## Housing:

The lack of affordable long-term housing is at the centre of the poly-crisis facing communities, exacerbating challenges like care home shortages, ageing populations, youth drain, and the cost-of-living crisis. These issues particularly affect rural Scotland. Development trusts have been at the centre of the response to the lack of affordable, long-term accommodation in their communities.

Our response to this section considers several other themes raised in the consultation document, notably in **the issue of attracting staff to remote and rural parts of Scotland (Rural Scotland, question 1) and the issue of reversing demographic changes such as youth drain and rural depopulation (Workforce, Question 8).**

### Actions:

- **Investment into community-led housing:** targeted support to ensure that community organisations have the capacity, staff, expert knowledge, funding, and post completion support to deliver and manage community housing. This is especially salient given the recent closure of Rural Housing Scotland, after over 20 years of support.
- **Asset Mapping to Tackle Empty Homes Issues:** Development Trusts should be supported in identifying empty homes and negotiating agreements with owners for long-term leases and renovations. Local Authorities should actively collaborate with community organisations to return these properties to productive use.
- **Regulation on second homes and short-term holiday lets:** improved regulation on short-term accommodation, and second homes is necessary, many communities face challenges with the lack of long-term accommodation. New housing should be built specifically for long-term rental or residence.
- **Revenue raising powers through increased control over local taxation:** Communities need greater local control over taxation to fund large-scale projects. This could include council tax reform, and the introduction of tourism taxes (such as the one recently passed in Edinburgh). This will require more research and considered implementation, however there are opportunities to link to Democracy Matters agenda.
- **Engagement with Community Organisations on Housing needs:** Housing development must be more equitably distributed. For example, most housing in Highland Local Authority is concentrated around Inverness, leaving other areas underserved.

- **Updated and Fit-for-Purpose Regulation for Co-Housing:** The co-housing model addresses the multiple issues of ageing populations, lack of care homes, and youth drain and has proven effective internationally but remains underutilised in Scotland due to outdated or unclear regulations. There is a **clear need to update these regulations to define and promote co-housing**, drawing on successful examples from Europe and England other regions to adapt these models for Scotland.

#### Examples Community Housing:

- [Tiree Community Development Trust](#): almost half of all housing stock on the island is seasonal, short term lets and second homes. 98% of island residents identified a need for more affordable homes. As a result, they conducted a housing needs assessment to develop a [housing strategy and action plan](#).
- [Regional Land Use Partnership Northwest 2045](#): extensive consultation identified affordable housing as the top priority for local people.
- [HOPE Cohousing](#): Purpose built community co-housing for elderly residents in Orkney.

#### Closing Statement:

At the core of this consultation response is a call for holistic and equitable approaches to policy-making that place communities at the heart of decision-making. DTAS urges a decisive **commitment to Fair Funding** and integrated policy action to empower communities to meet their economic, social, and environmental goals. By addressing these interconnected challenges, Scotland can build a greener, fairer, and more sustainable future for all.