



PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT 2026–2031 DTAS STATEMENT

What does it mean for our members?

PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT 2026–2031: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR OUR MEMBERS?

After an amazing two days at our conference, where 300+ people gathered from communities across Scotland, it's time to reflect on the **Scottish Government's new five-year Programme for Government**.

Throughout the conference, we heard so many examples of what development trusts are achieving: **creating homes, jobs and local enterprises; owning and managing assets; developing community energy; supporting people through difficult times; and finding solutions** that meet individual needs and work for their places.

There is a lot in the Programme for Government that is positive and relevant to this work. In many ways, it feels like the **Programme is recognising and supporting much of what development trusts are doing** every day.

WE PARTICULARLY WELCOME THE COMMITMENTS TO:

- put community empowerment and community wealth building at the heart of a new model of governance;
- implement Democracy Matters and strengthen community-level governance;
- support community ownership, regenerate town centres and address vacant and derelict land;
- take forward the Community Wealth Building Act and develop a new Social Economy Strategy;
- reform procurement to increase its local economic and social impact;
- increase CARES funding to £15 million, supporting community energy, community buildings and shared-ownership projects;
- improve community access to public land for renewable leases and ownership;
- invest in prevention, Whole Family Support and trusted community-based services;
- develop a new Partnership Agreement between the Scottish Government and the third sector;
- progress the Rural Renewal Bill and establish a Last Provider Fund for rural and island shops and pubs;
- commitment to a new Social Economy Strategy.

These are **important commitments** that create real opportunities for development trusts and the communities they serve.

The **focus on prevention and joined-up support** is important as our members are often the door to support within their communities. People might come into a community centre for a lunch club, youth activity or community event and through the relationships built there, find help with food, money, employment, housing or their wellbeing.

This is what real wraparound support looks like and it works because people can access help in a familiar place without feeling stigmatised. If the Government is serious about prevention and bringing services closer to people, **it must recognise and invest in the community infrastructure** that makes this possible.

We also welcome the **commitments around affordable housing** and ensuring the right homes are built in the right places. Development trusts are already creating housing in response to local needs, particularly in rural and island communities where housing is vital to tackling depopulation, retaining workers and sustaining services. However, **community-led housing needs to be much more clearly recognised** within these plans.

The **commitments on community energy are encouraging** with increased CARES investment, support for community and shared ownership, and improved access to public land are all positive steps. Ownership gives communities a lasting asset, income and control over how that wealth is reinvested. **We would like to see clear national ambitions for community and shared ownership**, supported by affordable finance and opportunities through public land, repowering projects and the proposed ScotWind Wealth Fund.

There are also areas where we would like the Programme to go further. Community ownership is supported, but there is **no clear commitment to a long-term Community Ownership Fund**. Communities need support for the whole journey and not only acquiring an asset, but organisational capacity building and post-acquisition investment needed to make it sustainable.

Democratic finance is also missing. The Programme talks a great deal about private capital, institutional investors, bonds and the Scottish National Investment Bank, but not about communities and citizens as investors and owners. **Community shares, community bonds and other forms of democratic finance can help communities** own housing, energy projects, shops, pubs and other essential assets.

We will also look carefully at the proposals for stronger regional government, Regional Economic Partnerships and the restructuring of public bodies. Regional structures must not take decisions further away from communities and we need to ensure that the **commitment to Democracy Matters is our priority**. Regional goals need to be matched by meaningful powers, resources and decision-making at community level.

Overall, there is much in the Programme for Government that we welcome and want to help deliver. **It provides a strong starting point for recognising the contribution communities** make to Scotland's economy, public services, climate ambitions and wider wellbeing.

The next step is to **make sure that recognition is backed by action and investment**. Development trusts should not be seen as organisations that can deliver short-term projects. They are a **vital part of Scotland's economic and social infrastructure**: locally accountable organisations that own assets, create wealth, provide services and bring people together.

OVER THE COMING WEEKS, WE WILL LOOK IN MORE DETAIL AT WHAT THE PROGRAMME MEANS FOR OUR MEMBERS ACROSS:

- community ownership and assets;
- democratic finance;
- community wealth building;
- community-led housing;
- community energy and a just transition;
- prevention and public service reform;
- local democracy and regional governance;
- wider inclusive and democratic business models (IDBMs)
- rural and island communities.

We will continue to make sure that our **members' experience and ambitions are not just part of the discussions that follow – they are essential and central** to Scotland's economic, social, cultural and environmental future.

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