Local Government and Communities Committee

Common Good Property and Funds

Submission from Rory Gianni

There is an unacceptable level of transparency regarding Common Good assets for the vast majority of Scotland. To illustrate this, I would like to draw attention to the availability of records held by Falkirk and Fife Council.

Although there is a comprehensive register of Falkirk Council assets available online, there is nothing similar for Common Good assets or funds. In contrast, Fife Council is perhaps unique in Scotland in having published GIS data showing Common Good land. This dataset was the result of research and work that involved the public. These maps are available on the Fife Council website, where it also encourages the public to submit information on the extent of common good assets in the area.

Unfortunately, the present situation for the vast majority of Scotland follows the case of Falkirk Council rather than Fife Council. This makes engagement with communities very difficult. An active citizen or journalist has to go to some effort to understand what resources are available and how they are currently deployed.

Making records is simply the first step. Without making them available, communities won’t be able to engage with common good assets and the potential they entail. It is also important to make sure data (such as Fife Council has published), is licenced openly so that data can be shared and re-used. These arguments and more are well captured in the Scottish Government’s very own Open Data Strategy published in 2015.