

Cross-Party Group on Social Enterprise

**Tuesday 3rd of December 2024, 18:00 –
20:00, The Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh**

MSPs

Ariane Burgess MSP

Emma Roddick MSP

Non-MSP Members

Booked Delegates:

Alasdair Nicholson, Point and Sandwick Trust

Amanda Grimm, Community Energy Scotland

Andy Paterson, Social Enterprise Scotland

Andy Rockall, Community Woodlands Association

Andy Williams, King George V Playing Field Management Committee, Kinross

Annie Howie, Social Investment Scotland

Arkadiusz Bisiorkowski, Nordic Walkers CIC

Aythan Lewes, EALA Impacts CIC

Barbara Kerr, Vibrantly Revive

Beth Landon, Borders Community Action

Bill Anderson, Ardrossan Community Development Trust

Breege Smyth, The Ardchattan Centre

Brenda Gifford, The Three Kings Cullen Association

Bria Clegg, Edinburgh City Council

Carron Tobin, SCOTO Community Tourism Network

Chuks Ododo, Datakirk

Colette Reilly, Finn's Place

Craig McEwen, Inspired Community Enterprise Trust Ltd

Craig McLellan, North Lanarkshire Council

Dan Rous, Community Dan

Daniel Fisher, Greyfriars Charteris Centre

David Bryan, Social Enterprise Academy
David Paton, Montrose Playhouse Project SCIO
David Somervell, Cohousing Scotland
Deirdre Aitken, Highland Blindcraft
Dierdre Campbell, Cohousing Scotland
Douglas Westwater, Community Enterprise
Ellie Burroughs, Imagine If. Space CIC
Eloho Efemuai, The Adelphe Community Outreach
Euan Robertson, CVS Falkirk & District
Fergus Christie, Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust
Gordon Rennie, Abington Community Development Group
Hyelni Norine Adeniyi Babs, NorineMindeyes Culture Connect
James Dunbar, New Start Highland
James Johnston, University of West of Scotland
Jean Carletta, HeatHack
Jennifer Robertson, Glasgow Social Enterprise Network
Jo Slater, Inspiralba
Joanne McClelland, EALA Impacts
John Todd, Oban Outdoor
Juli Huang, University of Edinburgh
Kate Darrah, The Ridge SCIO
Katie Flockhart, Clyde Cycle Hub
Katie McIntosh, North Lanarkshire
Katy McCauley, Scottish Parliament
Ken Greenshields, Link Group Ltd.
Kenneth Stirling, Enterprising Transition Care Ayrshire
Kerrien Grant, SKS Scotland
Kirsty McLuckie, Argyle and Bute Council
Lauren Scott, Firstport
Lesley Compston, KLAS Care CIC
Linda Gillespie, Develop Trust Association Scotland (DTAS)
Lisa Wardlaw, Kibble Education and Care Centre
Louise Scott, Media Co-op
Louise Tannasee, Scottish Government
Malcolm Harris, Social Enterprise Accountancy Scotland CIC
Malcolm McArdle, Govan Community Project
Margaret Whitelaw, Lenzie Community Development Trust
Matt McGrandles, Ceangaiul CIC
Maureen Burgess, Fife Voluntary Action

Mia Duncan, Improvement Service
Michal Rosinski, Muirhouse and Flemington Community Interest Company
Michelle Johnston, Keir Penpont and Tynron Development Trust
Michelle Thomson, Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire
Morven Taylor, Communities Housing Trust
Murray Allan, Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Nichola Hill, Abington Community Development Group
Nicky Hesketh, SKS Scotland CIC
Nigel Honey, Ability Academy
Nina Graham, CEIS
Oliver Escobar, University of Edinburgh
Opebiyi Adeniyi, member of the public
Pam Maxwell, Learning Link Scotland
Peter Flockhart, Clyde Cycle Hub
Rachel Le Noan, SCVO
Russel Fraser, Loch Ness Hub Ltd
Scott Mould, Cunninghame Housing Association
Sharon Rice-Jones, Perth and Kinross Council
Silviya Savova, Soul of the Junction SCIO
Stuart Nicoll, GTS Solutions CIC
Susan Murray, David Hume Institute
Tracy Thomson, Social and Community Capital
Trish Salt, Inverness Tool Library
Victoria McRae, CVS Falkirk & District

Apologies

n/a

Agenda

Emma Roddick, MSP:

Hello everyone, let's get started and I'll pass over to our first speaker, which will be Linda Gillespie, so I will hand straight over to you.

Linda Gillispie, COSS, DTAS:

Thank you very much.

I know many of you in the room. Actually, I'm Linda Gillespie and I head up community ownership at the Development Trusts Association Scotland.

The Community Ownership Support Service has been funded by the Scottish Government since 2011 and we sit within DTAS because it's a kind of it. It's a good fit, something like 77% of all of DTAS members own at least one asset.

And when you come into remote rural communities.

95% of the DTAS members in those areas own assets, and that can be kind of community centres that can be productive assets that can be Piers and harbours. So the costs sitting within DTAS is a kind of a sensible and a good fit.

Because service provides A 1 to 1 advisory service across Scotland for communities thinking about taking on an asset, we provide expert help to groups and that can be anything from surveys or building conditions.

We have a Training and networking opportunities and comprehensive web resource, we have a legal advisor in house who will do title searches and comment on any burdens that you have on any assets and any kind of impediments that might be there and we provide a facilities management service which is pre and post acquisition, that's a relatively new service that we've been providing. I think I can honestly say it is the most timely post I've ever appointed in terms of the demand for that service.

So we will work, although we sit within DTAS, we will work with communities, led organisations, communities of place and of interest. Those that want to use the powers under the Community Empowerment Act. So, we will work with communities of community led organisations that represent communities of place and of interest and that are eligible under the Community Empowerment Act to seek an asset transfer. We will also work with communities of place if they're looking to exercise their rights under the community right to buy.

In truth, that's an increasing kind of area of work for us. We'll also work with the public sector, the relevant authorities that have a required statutory requirement under the Community Empowerment Act. To respond to communities and work with them, and our role is to encourage them to have community friendly processes and just to kind of recognise where there might be issues in the approach they're taking, since COSS has started, there's been over 1400 community organisations come forward. To explore their options in relation to assets and that can be schools, community centres, just literally across the whole range and there's been more than there's been about 500 asset transfer requests.

As much as that data can be accurate, and there's been over 300 successful asset transfer requests.

In terms of our current workload that the rationalisation of the Church of Scotland's estate is having quite a significant impact on the type of assets coming into course. We had over 40 churches come in last year. We have been able to secure funding from the Heritage Lottery and Historic Environment Scotland to develop a new futures programme for churches, which is just to just go through options, appraisals and what could. What could this be used for and is it the right asset for a community to take on? So that programme is up and running now.

So that's kind of COSS and what we deliver, but we obviously work within quite an extensive ecosystem and there are other programmes that we draw on extensively. So we draw enterprise accelerator programme which is run by Community enterprise the Just enterprise programme that's funded by the Scottish Government to support social enterprises. And then there are a range of organisations that can provide support and advice. The TSI network Community Land Scotland. So there is a kind of ecosystem out there that.

Can work with communities to explore, whether to get it's an asset or a liability, I suppose I'm just going to finish with, the main challenges that we're facing at the moment and we were just talking at the start and I was saying I was speaking Northern Ireland and I had been commenting, we were being asked about why Community ownership had taken root. In Scotland and of course, some of the key things that you actually have to consider has been it's been a sustained policy imperative for 20 years and it's been underpinned by significant money to purchase and develop assets at this particular point, there is a massive demand.

From communities, there's a massive supply of assets that commute that are of interest to communities and they are exploring those options, and we are in a very challenging funding environment. So obviously there's a Scottish Land Fund which has been which has been us a bedrock of acquisition, the development funding in this space is much more challenging now and there's been various Scottish Government capital Regeneration Fund has funded development funding in the past. We had the UK Government's Community Ownership fund particularly last year that filled a gap. So, we're coming into a period where there's no obvious development funding and I would say that would be the kind of key challenge to keep this moving within Scotland. So that was me. Thank you.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

Thank you so much. I think a really important challenge to put to the Scottish Government as well and with the land reform bill going through Parliament at the moment, it's a really important time to talk about, OK, even if the legislative framework is there, what more do community groups need in order to be successful? And we'll move on next to David. Sorry, I thought you were on that side of me.

David Paton, Montrose Playhouse Project CIC:

Thank you very much and good evening, everyone and thank you for the invitation to speak tonight. My name is David Payton. I'm a director at Crawford Architecture, an employee-owned architectural practise based in Montrose.

But tonight, I'm here representing 2 community led projects in Montrose. The First Montrose Playhouse project and the second Promo Montrose Development and improvement. CIC. 2 very different initiatives but both rooted in the same core principle that when local people are given ownership over the places they live, incredible things can happen.

So, let's begin with the Montrose Playhouse as you can see on the screen this project started as a simple Facebook post back in 2013 by myself, a local architect with an idea to an idea to turn the town's disused swimming pool into a community centre, community cinema and art cent arts venue.

The public response initially was instant and overwhelming. A working group was then formed, volunteers got involved and within a few years we had raised enough support and developed a robust business plan and feasibility study to buy the building from Angus Council for £1. Under the Community Asset Transfer Scheme, with the perceived benefits to the town and area, the new cinema would be at the heart of that decision. We quickly discovered that while we were ready for the project, emotionally, creatively, and practically the systems around us weren't fully prepared to support a large-scale community development like this.

Angus Council at that time didn't have the structures or understanding to work alongside a grassroots project of that size that led to some real tensions, especially during the construction stage, a period that was incredibly tough for our volunteer team, who had already spent 10 years pouring their blood, sweat and tears into the project. It's hard to overstate the emotional cost of these moments when you've rallied your community, raised millions of pounds, and then hit a barrier you didn't expect from your own local authority. One of the biggest challenges was convincing the elected members to accept and administer the £2.26 million regeneration Capital

Grant fund, which we had secured. This fund, had to flow through the Council, who still hold a legal security over the asset to this day. It was a steep learning curve for all of us and something that we hope other community groups can avoid in the future.

But despite the struggles the Montrose Playhouse opened in October 2021, a fully accessible, inclusive and vibrant 3 Screen Cinema, Cafe, bar and activity spaces fully governed by a SCIO and reinvest in every penny back into the community. Benefit and social programmes that we run in the facility, as you can see from the slides that are transferring just now.

The transformation of the building was dramatic. A former derelict swimming pool owned by the council, and it made a massive impact on the North End of our town centre to see that build building brought back to life, I'm happy to say, though, that lessons have been learned from both groups during that period.

With that, our latest project in Montrose is Promo Montrose development and Improvement CIC which is focused on regenerating Montrose town centre. The relationship with Angus Council has felt much more constructive. They now understand the potential of Community ownership and while councils don't have direct funding or unrestricted funding for groups like ours. They have been credibly supportive and helpful in guiding us to external support and actively back in our efforts with a staggering, almost £300,000 already raised within the space of a year from Angus Council's guidance, and also £125,000 from the Seagreen Wind Farm Fund.

Promo has recently purchased 4 vacant shops on Montrose High Street. One will be our project base, the others are being refurbished and we're going to offer them as affordable retail spaces to new quality and sustainable local businesses.

Our long-term aim is to grow community owned property portfolio, not just fill in empty units, but actively shaping a town centre that's vibrant, culturally rich and locally led. We have also taken on a project offer to guide the various initiatives we have planned forward. Including, a major refurb and realignment of Montrose town centre itself. Set basically to create a busy town centre that's vibrant once again, focused on people and place.

At the heart of all of this is ownership, not just in the legal terms but emotional and social. That's what gave these projects the resilience and impact. But what we need is probably better structures, clearer pathways and more proactive support from public bodies to make that process smoother for future Community and volunteer groups. Community ownership is powerful, but it's not easy. It does take time.

Perseverance and a huge amount of trust between communities and institutions. When that trust is there, the results can be extraordinary. As you can see. So thank you very much for your time today.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

Thank you so much for sharing that and congratulations. Yeah, on everything that you've managed to do, I think it's great to hear that the, the Council relationship has improved. And you're right, it's about making sure that local authorities, public bodies, understand that this is for them too. It doesn't do the Council or the Community any good to have disused buildings and. Yeah, yeah. Brilliant. Thank you. Very well done. I'm going to pass over to Fergus next from Isle of Gigha.

Fergus Christie, Isle of Gigha:

Right. Good evening, everybody. My name is Fergus Christie. I'm a director, trustee of the Isle of Gear Heritage Trust. For those of you who don't know, Gigha is a very small island on the West Coast located roughly between the mainland and Isle, you've all heard of Island, we're just tucked in there.

So very brief bit of background, hopefully some photographs of the old Gigha will gear will come up. As I say, small island on the West Coast was a fairly oldish obviously photographs the island was historically owned by the MacNeil clan for about 1000 years, until roughly 1850, when for some reason or other they decided to sell it. It was initially bought by a family called Scarlet and in due course a chap called William Scarlett, he was an army officer and must at some stage have had the title of Captain Scarlet. See where I'm going there, yeah. Anyway, I don't say he was the prototype, but anyway, maybe, who knows?

They moved on in the early 20th century and the island passed through a number of landlords. The most famous or the most well-loved, shall we say, the Horlick family who owned it for about 30 years and basically established the what we call the Botanic Gardens, Achamore Gardens on Gigha. Another very benevolent owner was Sir James Landell's, who again owned the island for a period of time.

Thereafter, it passed through a number of landlords who were maybe less interested in the island itself and treated the island more as an asset. Basically, their estate, whatever. So, in 2001, the buyout took place. I think it was one of there was one of the first of these community buyouts.

What was generally unknown at the time. Was that the island was in a very bad or very poor state of repair. The housing was pretty shocking. The farms were fairly delicate, neglected, etcetera.

Notwithstanding this, the population of that stage, which was 90. Decided to buy out the island. There was a lot of political support for it at the time we bought the island for £4 million with help of various the lottery and Highlands and Islands development etcetera. But the island itself had to find £1 million within a year to repay.

Now I think the scheme that was operating the time would not operate now it would be different, but in any event, it necessitated the sale of the Mansion House and fundraising to the extent of about £350,000 to pay that back.

The Isle of Gear Heritage Trust, so that's the board effectively.

It runs the island for and does everything there. We have a number of directors and we've historically the trust manager. That role proved to be extremely difficult and over the years we have as it were remodelled our staffing structure and you'll see some photographs there of the boards on a trip to I think that was Jura and then in the middle is the flag raising day on gear. The handsome figure standing with his back to you happens to be myself, not even recognise me. And then, because we won the Social Enterprise Scotland award last year, we had a lovely trip to London and bottom right. You can see us at the Roundhouse in London where we had.

An amazing evening.

Now one of our big challenges obviously is funding the island and getting income.

Early on we established a wind farm, and we have four wind turbines. Under the let's call it the more old-fashioned system and one newer one, which is from 2014, which is much more efficient and generates quite a lot of income, both of those are subsidised by the feed in tariff and by the rocks. That's the Renewable obligation certificate.

Both of which are about to run out in a couple of years' time. So, we are faced immediately with. I'll come back to this in a second with an immediate challenge of how to replace that income, which comes in at about roughly £250,000 per annum for the island.

We have housing stock, we have about 40 houses, cottages which we let out and we also have 4 working farms in varying stages. We've had to sell a number of properties basically to keep ourselves afloat, and there's an ongoing challenge.

It's pretty permanent of keeping the housing stock up to a suitable standard. The farms are another issue, as I'm sure you can imagine. It's easy enough to replace windows, but to replace or to re energise 700 acres or whatever of farmland is extremely difficult.

Financial stability, we are a little bit restricted in what we can do with rent. One of our main sources of income at the rents and gear are extremely low and there's not an awful lot we can do about that. As I say, we've sold off some assets, mostly derelict

assets. So, if we come across up a derelict farmhouse or something like that, it is economically much more sensible for us to sell it and in gather whatever it is £100,000 leave the job of doing it up to something else. As I said, we've restructured the staffing, we've tried to cut core costs such that in the last six years we've reduced our debt from just over £2,000,000 to 0.

So we're moving forward and I've just put in there a clip from our, we get fairly bad publicity from some aspects of the press. I think it's because of what we are and what we do. So, we're trying to fight back on that, although I mean that's a bit of an uphill struggle. Insofar as development is concerned, we have been very proactive in that. You'll see on the top right there our new campsite which we developed over the last about four to five years. It began just before COVID. Quite literally from a muddy field, and that is thriving and producing a good source of income. We have just opened a new helipad, which is great for you know sick people and so on. And we've also developed a path network around the island, which again is very is great for tourist attractions. Also have the world famous Ackamore Gardens, which obviously was absolutely hammered by storm even just a couple of months ago, and we're trying to rebuild that one. We've also developed a Ranger service on the island which again over the last few years is doing extremely well and we're looking at nature.

We have a big challenge, which is our hotel, which closed a couple of years ago for tenant reasons, let's say. We've just redeveloped that on the photograph you just saw a few slides ago was on Gigha Day where we actually opened the hotel or the bar anyway, which has been redeveloped due to some funding challenge that we face are a lot.

Financial sustainability is obviously very difficult, we basically not quite go month to month, but we certainly keep a very close eye on the finances as to where the money's coming from. That's not just for the next couple of months. We're looking ahead now, as I mentioned about the wind turbine falling by the way. So the income from that being a little less certain. So we are looking at that. We're looking at other sources of income. We're constantly on the lookout for new businesses. Some issues.

Practical issues like connectivity on the island to the Internet is difficult and can come and go, so it's not very encouraging for people setting up a business. The ferry is a big problem because we have 1 ferry, and it is an absolute lifeline and that was brought home recently with the storm because the island was literally cut off. Five

days with no food coming or going, and as with many other places, we have an ageing population and it's very difficult to know what to do about that.

We are for our opportunities and aspirations, we are we are continuing to look, as I say at financial stability. We are looking at renewable energy. We are looking at working in partnership with as many organisations as we possibly can and the winning of the Social Enterprise Scotland award last year has certainly given us a bit of a boost for that. It's promoted me to go round well some places anyway and to try and promote and to look for funding opportunities, we're also trying to engage with the Community as much as we possibly can. That might sound easy, but it can be problematic. It's not unlike, I suppose, local government. People are always complaining and always saying what you're doing wrong rather than being very positive about it.

And we're obviously looking for business opportunities. We've been through many possible some work, some don't. We obviously would be great to have a larger scale investment, but like a distillery or something like that. But that's just not so far improved possible. So, although there are challenges, we are extremely positive. We've come a long way in the last, particularly about the last 10 years and we're hoping that that will continue. Thank you. Thank you very much for this.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

And yeah, it's just such a success story. And I think that's easy for a folk to forget when there is. You always do feel like you're on the defence trying to explain how great it is that Highlands and Islands, we've got such great examples of community ownership. But I think, you know, being able to point to.

National award and some of the things that are going on and you know, you might have seen Slate is up for sale and I've heard more than one person say this should be the next Gigha should be the next Eigg it's this is this is yes please do please do. But we'll come across and give them lessons.

I'm sure it'd be appreciated. I'm going to move on now to EALA passing over to Aythan and Joanna.

Aythan Lewes & Joanna McClelland, EALA Impacts:

It's lovely. Thank you very much for the introduction and well, amazing to all the speakers I spoke before us. So, my name is Jo, I'm a conservation accredited architect and this is Aythan. He's a chartered building surveyor. EALA is a community interest company, a social enterprise, a not-for-profit architecture and building surveying practise. We have been going for 3 1/2 years. We do everything

you'd expect from an architecture building surveyor practise feasibility studies, planning applications, building warrants, tender and construction information, surveys, audits and reports. But as a social enterprise, any surplus from this activity is used to fund our work for people and organisations who can't normally afford support with their buildings. This means we do a lot of work for clients who don't usually get help.

We only work for communities of private individuals, public sector and private and 3rd sector organisations, and only on existing buildings, so clients for us might be a group of tenement owners, a residence association, a community group, a charity or a government or NGO.

We work to create vibrant, resilient and impactful clients and spend a lot of our time helping people to organise themselves. We've already spoke about structure, and we've already spoke about governance to become themselves constituted or incorporated and to sort out their governance. This is usually the foundation of everything else. This then allows us to do our job in the transition to a sustainable society and economy.

We see ourselves as a transition enterprise, so we're seeking to move supposedly, functioning markets, which are failing our society and economy into regenerative action. This means we have to work in what are considered broken markets, which are areas where the money doesn't stack up, but services are still needed, since if they did make financial sense, existing for profits would already work there.

A classic example of a broken market is community groups and 3rd sector organisations with buildings. Buildings require a level of capital expenditure and create an ongoing regulatory and financial burden unlike anything else an organisation might take on. By and large, we find that most the third sector organisations are operating at a financial level where failure to plan properly for the necessary.

Their buildings can easily sink them. This is the case whether they own them, or they are the leaseholders are certain types of lease place that same build on organisation as if they own them. We've spoken about this situation is that the public sector have significant assets that they have been failing to invest in for over a decade, which they are now trying to get rid of or let out. Third sector organisations often see that having a building can be a cure to many of their problems, a way to have some security and income, a presence, a feeling of solidarity. They often leap at the opportunity. Sadly, they are often under advised and under supported.

We have worked with many organisations who are either at the beginning of taking on a building or have had one for a while and we've got some lessons, main lessons that we've taken from these clients;

1. Know what you have. Do you know what your responsibilities are? Don't rely on the relationships, the person you get along with the Council or the landlord can move on. Something could happen in their business organisation. That changes their outlook towards you. Do you know the building you're getting your hands on? Have you had a survey before taking it on, or at least review before taking on a tenancy?
2. The need for long term planning, so that's not five years, that's 30 years. Buildings work in cycles of several decades. There can be 10 or 20 years between large works, but at the same time they need little and often maintenance. Something might look good over five years, but in year 6 something big needs to be paid for like a new roof or new Windows. You want to know if you'll be holding the baby when the music stops. Will you be holding the lease when the roof needs renewal?
3. Time maintenance and capital planning into your business plan. It's part of the business plan, but building me put building maintenance next to your printer in the business plan. It's as simple as that. If the roof leaks and one room can't be used, there needs to be a budget for it to pair. Some uses need a heated space? Some uses don't. So if you can't afford a heating, can your operational plan adapt to an unheated use?
4. Understand that professionals struggle to give out ad hoc advice. That's us. It's very hard to dip in and out unless we have set up a relationship in a certain way with many of our clients, we do a building passport first, which gives us an overview of the whole building and a 30 year plan, and that makes it much easier for us to do small packages of work over several years because we've seen it in its entirety.
5. Where of warning contractors aren't advisors. They're great at carrying out work. I'm awful with a hammer, but their advice is normally narrow, narrow, and formed by their own specialism and commercially conflicted. They don't carry insurance that protects you if their advice turns out to be wrong.
6. You don't need to become a building expert, but you do need to know which expert is needed for each job and have an overall plan and approach to help

them do their work in a coordinated way.

7. Be flexible and willing to do things in small steps where the current funding environment, the idea of one big job with several 100,000 lbs. Is unlikely, but it's also very often not necessary. A coat of paint, a small change to a door or window, or new furniture can often bring the change you're looking for. Ask the question, do you really need a building? Is it collaboration? Collaboration, more suitable in the first instance? Try and tie in an incremental plan for the building into your evolving business plan.
8. Building works always cost more than you might think. Prelims fees, contingencies, inflation, legal fees, statutory consents all make works more than anyone ever thinks. Get a cost projection for what the projects will cost at the end, not an optimistic projection of what it will hopefully cost at the beginning.

There's 10, just so you see where we're going here.

9. That there's nine. Make sure you have some of your own money to fund the start of a project. Funders rarely fund the essential advice at the start, when all the big decisions are made, make sure you can pay for this little bit yourself. We do most of our pro bono work at the start of a project to fill that gap.
10. This isn't always, but often funders are not your friend because of historic panics about badly spent funding, many government funding streams are narrow and limited to how they can be spent and are often more of a burden than a help. You will always need to work around the works that funders will pay for.

Requiring weird, complicated procurement and additional funding to fill in gaps. Often there free advice is not what it's cracked up to be.

What we would like to see is a transition fund to assist all third sector clients taking on buildings to upskill and employ suitable advisers at the right time in the process.

Accept the building should be passed across, either in ownership or leasehold without building capacity in the incoming owner or tenant to meet their obligations. How many organisations do you know have been brought down by

problems to do with their buildings? Yet this key area of capacity is rarely directly addressed by public sector organisations.

The public sector can leave a great legacy and a more resilient third sector for a relatively modest amount of funding linked to asset transfer or leasing to 3rd sector organisations. Spending funding on a lease review, a pre-acquisition survey, a feasibility or a building passport might seem like a luxury.

But unknowns can be the biggest shock to any enterprise, let alone frontline third sector enterprises who have genuine dependence. Third sector organisations are no longer a niche interest of semi-retired professionals and volunteers. They have become critical organisations providing frontline services, stepping into the gap left by a retreating public sector.

They can't afford to be unstable and worried about keeping a roof over their heads. Their success in doing so is a factor of many things, but organisational capacity and capability is the foundation. The rest is based upon. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

And yeah, thank you for being so specific. I think one of the challenges in politics is so many so often people come to us and they say, you know, do something or fix this. But you know, you've got transition fund. This is what we need. And and I think I'll get in ahead of what I'm sure somebody is going to ask and see if we can circulate those.

Tips that CHEAT SHEET fantastic. I'm going to open up then to two questions from attendees. Oh, sorry, Amanda.

Sorry, I'd scrolled past your name there, Amanda. Thank you. Yes.

Amanda Grimm, Community Energy Scotland:

So, I'm Amanda grim. I'm the policy manager at Community Energy Scotland and I'm going to be talking about. Yeah, next slide, please. Andy, going to be talking about how Community energy can power community, wealth building and a truly just transition. So for those who don't know, Community Energy Scotland is a member led organisation. We represent about 470 community energy groups around Scotland. Some of our Members are operating their own renewables, turbines, solar panels or hydro schemes, while others are involved in community

led energy demand reduction projects like retrofitting a whole street or running an EV car club. Next slide, please.

So today I'm going to do a brief case study on how Community Energy Scotland supported the Horshader community on Lewis and the Western Isles to develop the Western Isles. First community owned wind turbine starting back in 2004. Just to be upfront, I wasn't involved in this project, but my colleague who was has told me all about it, so I can pass it on.

So yeah, this the community. Well, first, just to say it's a small, dispersed community of just over 150 people on the West Coast of Lewis. They came together after they were approached by a private developer looking to develop wind turbines on common grazing land with just a minimal financial return for the host community and the community there didn't think this was the right approach and they decided to get together and develop their own turbine for the sole benefit of the community. Next slide please.

This decision was motivated by the fact that there were very high levels of fuel poverty in the Community and a real commitment to do something about it. They formed Horshader Community Development Trust and they knew that they needed a revenue generating project to raise enough money. To look after people in the community and they suspected that a community owned wind turbine could do this could meet this need. So, they reached out to Community Energy Scotland for support.

At first, we mainly supported by helping them tell their story to funders. So, we did community consultations. We did open days, and we gathered data on the actual levels of fuel poverty and other problems in the Community, such as the lack of adequate public transport. There were some buses, but you couldn't rely on them to get to GP appointments on time. They weren't frequent enough, so that was a big issue as well. The community set their own objectives for what they wanted to do with the revenue from the turbine and these were to improve quality of life, increase employment prospects, protect the environment and encourage young people to stay in the area. Next slide please.

I'm happy to say that it's been a big success. The turbine has been operational since 2012. The Development Trust owns a trading subsidiary and they sell all the electricity to the grid and it generates, I believe over £100,000 in net income a year and all that money is gifted to the Community development trust and used for the

benefit of the community, and it has addressed many of the needs that they previously identified.

So, they've given out fuel poverty grants to those experiencing fuel poverty. They've bought a minibus, and they run a community transport service, getting people to those doctors' appointments and supporting the local schools with the school run. They've also contributed to countless projects that have improved quality of life for people in the area.

So, there's a lunch club for over 60 fives where they serve nutritious meals prepared by local chefs. They've bought a Polycrab or multiple polycrub, so really strong polytunnels that allow the community growing project to grow an affordable, affordable fruit and veg in strong winds for the community. They've contributed to things like the local Rowing Club and the carers project, and even building a new base for the Scottish Mountain Rescue Service there. So all really important things. Next slide please.

And that's just one turbine in one community but zooming out a bit and looking at the Western Isles as a whole, they benefit from 14 community owned wind turbines and those collectively generate about £3,000,000 in profit each year.

Now when you compare that to the same number of commercially owned turbines in the area, that's 25 times more benefit from the community owned turbines going directly back into the community.

Next slide please.

But it's not just about money getting together to develop a renewable energy project also provides more intangible social benefits for the community. These words are from a recent report that was done on the social value of Community energy and Horshader Community Development trust also put it on their own words.

They said that coming together to develop their energy project, help them build social capital, which is really important in a remote rural area, it empowered the community through giving them a voice and involving them in decisions. And it greatly increased the community's confidence. It's worth saying here, though, that it's not just something for rural remote communities. We're seeing more and more community energy groups forming in urban and suburban areas. Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and there's huge potential, especially with rooftops on community buildings. Council buildings for community owned solar, which also generates some good returns. Next slide, please.

So why is this so important? Well, I think we're at this critical juncture here. There are really high levels of fuel poverty throughout Scotland, really high energy bills. Meanwhile, public finances are more and more squeezed, and there's not enough funds flowing into communities for good projects.

At the same time, communities are feeling a real lack of control about influencing planning and developments in their area. This is leading to disempowerment, disillusionment, and, unfortunately, growing opposition to new turbines, pylons and sometimes to net zero in general. So how do we change direction? Well, community ownership, including shared ownership, gives communities a real ownership stake in Net Zero, that financial as an element of control, it rebalances the risks and the rewards and the burdens and the benefits of the energy transition, and that is essential for a just transition, is about democratising as well as decarbonising our energy system.

As I showed, it keeps money in local economies and community energy can be the power behind the Community wealth building agenda, which is really key right now. Next slide please. So I think that's probably mainly my time, but I'll just end by saying Community Energy Scotland are a member of Scottish Community coalition.

We've published several policy papers which you can access through that link on the slide, and one of our kiosks right now is for the Scottish Government to establish a Scottish Community Wealth fund which would ensure that all communities across Scotland have access to finance for revenue generating projects like the one that Horshader took on and benefited so much from. So that we can ensure that no community is left behind by the energy transition. That's it. Thank you.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

Thank you so much, Amanda, and thank goodness we didn't miss out on that presentation because that was really interesting. And yet again good to have some specific recommendations from yourself about how we can move forward and support people. I mean, my mailbox is full as you would imagine, with people who are frustrated about hosting renewable developments and paying far too much for energy. So, it's definitely something we need to get in in front of.

I will now open up for questions if who would like to go first?

Alasdair Nicholson, Point and Sandwich Trust:

I have a question.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

Brilliant.

Alasdair Nicholson, Point and Sandwich Trust:

OK. Can the panel consider whether forestry land Scotland's consideration of Cowl community energies bid for the lease was wholly inadequate? And can the land bill be strengthened to give community the first opportunity to bid? In addition, issued ownership of land on which those leases exist be transferred to communities? Utilising asset transfer or some similar method.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

Amanda, would you like to come back in?

Amanda Grimm, Community Energy Scotland:

Sure. Yes, thank you, Alistair. Yes, we fully believe that the repowering development at Cowl should have been offered at least proactively offered to the community. The Community should have been given first refusal. To take over the lease and you know, they should have been given an opportunity to raise the money to be able to do so. They did in fact put in an application to take it over, but it was rejected.

Which we think goes against forestry land Scotland's community strategy, which says it will support communities to take on ownership of land, I believe. But we're delighted that the group the coalition has now triggered the Community asset transfer process and are going to try to take over the land. So, what one of our key policy asks is that when renewables, when wind farms come up for repowering, they the lease, the lease should be offered to community groups to give the first refusal, especially when they are on public land and that aligns with Scottish Government Community Empowerment Act and strategy and community wealth building strategy, and MPF 4, which says that it will support proposals or applications where there's community ownership, so yes, definitely that's the direction it should be going.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

Thanks and when it comes to the land reform bill, it can certainly be strengthened and I know I'm one of many MSPs who at the moment is looking towards stage 2 and what can be done and what can be brought forward as an amendment.

I would also say there's still the Community wealth building bill coming forward this session, so there are plenty of opportunities to look at what can be strengthened and looking at you know the issues that are being raised in, in this meeting tonight and whether anything can be supported more there. We have another online question.

Andy Paterson, Social Enterprise Scotland:

Yeah, we should do. Margaret sent me one earlier. So, this is a question from Margaret from Lenzie Community Development Trust.

The UK Chancellor has stated that the world has now changed and we are in an era of increasing uncertainty and so the government has commissioned a report into food security looking at food production, distribution and storage, early information suggests a too high degree of concentration in a few long distant locations. Does this have any implications for community ownership?

So, anyone on the panel is keen to answer that one.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

No one's no one's leaping forward, but certainly I can, I can say. Yes, Fergus.

Fergus Chrisie, Isle of Gigha:

I think on gear we produce a very small amount of food. As such, we have dairy farms, but all the milk is taken away. And as you know, the price of milk is pretty difficult and so on. So broadly speaking, all the food that is consumed in gear comes from the mainland other than you know, the old potato patch or something like that. But we have no actual food production programme at all. But maybe something worth looking at?

Emma Roddick, MSP:

And I think although the situation is maybe more noticeable when it comes to island communities, because as you were saying earlier, you know, if the ferry doesn't run, then the shelves are empty. It is a problem that we see across the country and people.

Are going to have to change habits and attitudes as well as government driving change if we are going to become more food secure because to be food secure you can't expect all food all the time at any time of the year. Yes, yourself.

Douglas Westwater, Community Enterprise:

Hi, thank you. Yeah, I'm just going to go way back to.

Oh, sorry, sorry. That's Douglas from Community Enterprise. I am sorry. So we're an organisation that do have always done a lot of work with community assets and I'm a passionate believer in the difference that they make. So I've seen it over many, many years and as often happens these I'm going to probably try and hide a statement within a question, but I'll try my very best to make a question.

As going back to one of Linda's points way back, and although I think everybody mentioned this, and are we seeing a change because of that perfect storm almost, of there's an ecosystem there's funding available for purchase were tripping over ourselves with assets all over the place, but there's no money to do anything with them, so we can't do that. They're developing those buildings, which is what we used to do up to really quite recently and knowing that we could get funding to turn them into something.

Largely, grant funded so you then starting from you know 0 and it was hard enough to sustain a building, whereas now we probably can't do that without there being repayable finance and community shares and loans and that drives the need to be very, very commercial and income generating. So, you can't just have a coffee mornings and brownies.

So I just wonder, I'll be a cusp of change where the nature of Community assets and how to sustain them is going to be different. And does that mean it's going to be harder in certain areas than others?

Linda Gillispie, COSS, DTAS:

I think that's absolutely the case, Douglas. I think we're absolutely at a point of change and we're seeing local authorities in particular disposing of assets that they don't even want to be disposing of, you know, Falkirk 132 assets, South Lanarkshire, West Lothian.

And of course, communities are reacting to the kind of threat of loss. And there is there is work to be done in helping communities rationalise. I mean, I do absolutely take the points that's made that's been made about professional services and the conditions of buildings. But there's also a real cost of doing nothing.

So, there will be literally communities that think they have assets in the civic space, but they'll be counting the church hall into that mix. And actually, that church hall might be closing in three years' time and they're losing their community centres so. There, it's something. You're absolutely right. We are at a point of change in terms of how we kind of navigate that kind of those assets that are on a stewardship model, the kind of brownies, you know, the 80% of community centres in the Highlands that are in Community ownership that are in on a stewardship model.

Versus the ones that actually need significant redevelopment money, we'll have to absolutely be looking at that and that you know, all of the panel have mentioned. Community benefits and that type of funding and we are seeing that money come in. But of course, that's not equally spread across Scotland. So yes, difficult times.

Fergus Christie, Isle of Gigha:

If I can just come in, we have that problem on gear in that it is easy enough. I say that with some trepidation to secure funding for new builds, and we recently did that with a small 5 houses building project.

Albeit there's a debt and so on attached to it, but it was that was easy enough to raise a very large amount of money. We cannot raise any money at all for renovation of old buildings, just zero. It's not even worth asking. And the net effect of that is that when they become available for whatever reason, even if its ageing population said so people dying and moving on the options really range from demolition and more particularly to sale.

Now the problem there for community owned asset, we are selling off to private individuals, certainly houses and bits of land and the problem there is I think it kind of

goes against the Community ownership model because we have no alternative other than to sell it because we can't do it up and we can't let it rot. So yes, there's a big problem there and I think the answer is some sort of, method of funding of renovation of all of old buildings and making otherwise derelict buildings and land into something that's worth.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

And you would think wouldn't, sorry. Obviously one second, he would think it wouldn't be too much to think about in terms of if it were existing funds that some of them are underspent if there could just be some discretion. So, I had a social housing provider, chief execs say to me, you know, I can.300 grand if I knock down this house. Yep. To build a new one. But you won't give me 20 to fix it.

Fergus Christie, Isle of Gigha:

That's absolutely. It so if yeah, I would be all in favour of, as you say, if that money could in some way be reallocated. Leaving aside the kind of historic benefit, et cetera, et cetera, but it's just more, I think it's part of the community that we are getting rid of asset wise. So it is very significant and it's just going to get worse.

Andy Paterson, Social Enterprise Scotland:

Sorry 2 seconds. Is it OK to end to bring in Ariane here? She's just been waiting for a minute.

Ariane Burgess, MSP:

Hello. Yeah, I don't actually. It's fantastic because this was a question I was going to ask the panel about the whole because I see across the region so many buildings. So, Ariane Burgess, Highlands and Islands MSP. I see across islands and islands, a lot of big buildings that communities are being asked to take on and I had a conversation some months ago now with Ian Galland, who's the chief exec Zero Waste Scotland, and what we were talking about was how do we start to look at the value of building buildings? Not as in a building that exists. But the materials in the building and how do we kickstart that economy? That circular economy piece where we actually see the stones as valuable and that they can be taken down and taken apart the slate of the roofs and that kind of thing, and then recirculated and rebuilt into things that we could, the communities could actually use.

So, I think there's something in there where we need to kind of get some kind of fund to kick start this circular economy. But I would be interested to get. Your sense of that direction, because I know, I know we're very attached to our buildings because it's part of our heritage. It's the visual on the High Street and that kind of thing. But on the other hand, I'm very aware of communities being completely burdened as, as has been discussed by buildings at the Council, can't handle. So why would in some cases communities handle them incredibly well and in other situations it's much harder to navigate that process.

Joanne McClelland, EALA Impacts:

It's actually quite frustrating, but also very exciting at the same time that we're having this discussion in this room and like we have prominent people here able to listen to it. So, it's great. So, some of our day job work, we have done funded work for zero Waste Scotland, albeit under Steven Boyle at the time and for developing and building passports. So, we deliver building passports on the ground, we. Them from multiple buildings across Scotland where we assess and audit all the building materials, give them a triple bottom line value for those materials and so those materials can be reused, potentially in a second job we identify we always try and identify local social enterprises that could take those materials and either get up skilled training and opportunity for business cases to be developed an opportunity or be stored in other buildings so that that is a as a service exists and people pay us to deliver that and Zero Waste Scotland funded us to get kickstarted in that.

We also are one of six social enterprises or six large scale re-use hubs across Scotland. Again they are being supported by Zero Waste Scotland and we have 1 based in Edinburgh all around the sort of background of MPF4 about the circular economy hubs, so MPF 4, there's a big opportunity there, I guess and there's six of us across Scotland were the one in Edinburgh mentioned, but there's we've also done work for the one Aberdeen writing and developing a business proposal for them, the buying and developing a business for the one in Edinburgh.

We have reached out to local authorities in various tranches and there is little to 0, if not negligible, interest in supporting the MPF 4 circular economy hub deliverability of it, even if it's we can get funding from Social Enterprise Scotland to deliver it.

We've got business partners who go for it. There's just a sort of, I don't think we want that in our backyard. Please. Thank you very much. So, I think as was just done that very small point there. Ariane, it exists and we are there are people out there busting a gut in terms of like private practise social enterprises to deliver that.

So we'd welcome a further conversation on that one. I think just on the conversation about the, the wider conversation about the Community assets.

It is frustrating, but I think it's again, it's a really good opportunity. We cannot be supporting just new builds and not existing buildings. There is never any funding for maintenance. There hasn't been in the entire time I've really worked in my career in my career enlisted buildings, there are, it's actually quite interesting. There's a lot of policy and structure that exists in heritage that I recognise and think would be really useful to use for the every building, even simple things like if you're going to demolish a listed building, you have to sort of do marketing for two years to prove that it can't be bought or leased or used by another community. Use of local communities. So, you can't sort of just get out with the viability assessment side of things. You have to sort of demonstrate that we have checked and we have marketed it.

Same exists for change of use in terms of planning as well. If you're going to go from some private developer wants to try and go from it being retail or commercial use or community use. You have to demonstrate that you've tried marketing it for another entity to use it before you're allowed to turn it into private use. So I think a lot of tools maybe exist in the heritage sector that could be brought into the every building sector. That would also, as you say there, raise the value of those materials. On a sort of more holistic, tangible approach and not just the sort of heritage slates and lime approach.

Linda Gillispie, COSS, DTAS:

Can I just ask why there is resistance to the reuse the reuse hubs?

Athan Lewes, EALA Impacts:

I mean, I'm not sure how cynical I'm allowed to be, but I'll go for it. But I think the I think there's an issue with anything significant in the circular economy actually coming to pass. I think, you know, it's this whole oh reuse your coffee cup, but if we want to get away from single use buildings, will that affect?

A lot of investors, you just need to look at Wyneford recently. You know that got demolished over the weekend there. Well, last weekend.

You know, this idea that we might be serious about refurbishment before demolition and then something like the Wyneford happens.

So this idea that the circular economy on any sort of scale is actually taken kind of seriously and given significant support when the linear economy is so profitable. Seems to be and like I say, we've been at this door for what, four years now. Yeah. So I think I think that would be might be an overly cynical response, but.

Joanne McClelland, EALA Impacts:

There's fear, isn't it? You know, we're going from what we've recognised are fully functioning, albeit we might call it a broken market, a fully functioning market of the linear economy, and it's quite harsh to say I'm sorry you can't make money and run your business in that way. It's quite blunt to say that openly so you kind of have to do it in a in a most, but you could just say that, but I can't say that I'm not a politician. I'm not in charge of various things, but I can advocate for a change and try and make little business models that help people going from being a new build, a house builder to a mass house repairer instead of a mass house building, you can be a mass house repairer and I can help make the business cases for things like that instead of being UPVC window installer I can make the case for you instead of a boom and bust UPVC window industry, you're going to have a slow and steady session case window.

Aythan Lewes, EALA Impacts:

I think it's worth saying just how complex the circular economy is compared with our linear economy as well. So you've got this. You've got to go from anything big and substantial like bits of buildings. You've got to go from so much of our construction sector works on just in time. So you know, because that was why we had such an issue after COVID because all the just in time supply chains globally had all been disrupted through COVID and getting them re geared again, talk about a year and a half so.

Has led to a lot of price inflation about materials, which is why construction costs so much more these days, so it all works on quite a just in time model. If you if you are relying on bits of other buildings coming up before you can use them on the next site, you've got a lot of buffering needed.

You can have, you know, just a very fundamentals of the economics of that. You can have to hold basically hold stock. We did an exercise for Zero Waste Scotland looking at a triple bottom line, sustainable deconstruction of a tower block in North Lanarkshire versus business as usual demolition and it's this idea that you might

have bits of tower block in fields across Scotland before the next tower block needs them or before their next use, there is just that fundamental practicality of it. And then you've also got the kind of the siloing of in use stuff and capital projects.

So, they're funded completely differently. They're considered completely differently, but the circular economy needs you to break down and lose that silo and until every single fund out there is mostly capital funding rather than revenue, and you need to lose that silo. But that means that all of our funding needs to not see a difference between those two things is a really fundamental thing.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

Is it also part of the problem that you know by the time a building's being demolished, it's too late? Because really, it should have been thought about before the building was built. I'm thinking, you know, things like purpose built student accommodation that is cheap and cheerful and definitely not designed to have a future use once the students are out of it is do we need to be doing more of the pre-building stage.

Joanne McClelland, EALA Impacts:

Yeah, you're absolutely right. I suppose the thing that we do, the pre demolition audit stage is a bit lag. It's a bit after the event, isn't it? You know, the building's coming down. So, you're salvaging materials in the best possible way possible and doing good things with them. But yeah, you're 100% right.

Anything new that is being built should be designed for maintenance as a minimum, but designed for deconstruction and design for adaptability. So if you take the short term, let the model there, the best thing you could do with it is just put separating walls that are not structural walls in it so it can be designed basically as private residential homes and then it's just subdivided up to be an operating model of a short of a short term let student accommodation.

So you're thinking about what is the main use of this material that were there's embodied carbon that we're using to construct something with what is the most length of time we're going to get out of it. Obviously, housing is quite an obviously key one, but then you can subdivide things up and use them as meantime uses temporary uses for the next 5 to 10 years. Should we have a deficit in student housing ever, but that is a way to do that.

Athan Lewes, EALA Impacts:

That's interesting. One that the most often the damaging thing happens after the demolition. And so one of the things that we pushed for, I mean we were part, we were part of the Wyneford campaign. There's no point pretending we weren't. Just to get everyone's know, Wyneford was a block of four towers through in Glasgow, with them just checking.

But the point, the point about that is that you can demolish something without saying what comes next. And so and so the actual act of demolition itself is and why I'm might have might have had asbestos and all the rest of it. And that was one of the things that held up the demolition. But by and large, the demolition of a building is not actually all that harmful. It's that it creates a space for a new thing to come next, which is typically harmful.

Joanne McClelland, EALA Impacts:

In in the example in heritage and listed buildings, you cannot demolish a listed building without saying what comes next. So, all those rules and those structures that the planning department use on some types of buildings, they could easily swing them over to the every building.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

Fantastic. Thank you. I love hearing new conversations in this place so often we have the same ones over and over, but this is this is brand new to me. Do you have a question?

Scott Mould, Cunningham Housing Association:

Kind of more of a statement than a question to be fair, but it may solicit.

Oh, sorry. Yeah. My name is Scott Mould, so I've got a few roles. I'm head of social and economic development for a housing association down the West Coast, which involves me being head of Cunningham Furniture Recycling Company, which is a furniture reserving organisation. And I'm also chair of a local development trust to be set up done there few years ago, so just getting back to the whole reuse of thing and reuse in general and the circular economy, I think the biggest challenge in relation to that at the moment has been a growing thing for many, many years. We're now in at threat of that shrinking and not because there's a lack of social impact or a lack of environmental impact, because that increases the difficulty is the value of those

reuse items. So as the cost-of-living crisis ceases, the price of new items increasing and the price of overheads that you can't control increase in the value of reuse items is decreasing.

So it's become an extremely more difficult for these organisations to be able to survive and I think there needs to be some sort of

Joanne McClelland, EALA Impacts:

Just I guess what we've sort of found and it might sound weird, perverse to say this, but that actually the reuse economy should shrink because what you should be getting into is that maintaining and repairing economy. If you think back in the good old days, you would get a table that you could sort of you know maintain sand, and pass on over and over again. Now we get lots of tables that end up in the re-use because they're sort there's a sort of, there's a quick and fast way of getting a new one.

So the sort of the quick and fast way of getting one is only possible because we have an abundance of oil and gas and petrochemical based materials. That allow us to have an abundance of new, replaceable things, but that but that means you're you have an increase in reuse things, whereas if you have something that took, shall we say, renewable energy from local community in order to construct it, there's a higher chance at the higher chance that that value of that table is going to cost more upfront. But maybe you get a table as a service and the table gets live and it gets sanded and you know someone comes in repairs and maintains every five years and it does get passed on. So, it's about just think it is an interesting transition that you that the work will have to go from being reuse provision to repair provision.

Scott Mould, Cunningham Housing Association:

We had as I suggested its the value I guess of the item. It's the issue. I mean what we've seen across the sector in the last two years is the average price value of reuse items, talking furniture, beds, that kind of stuff reducing by about 50% while your overheads continue to increase. Now there's a huge amount of money involved in reduce and going to collecting the items because people won't pay for collection. You've got to go and it's a donation. You go and you pick it up. You have a van, you have to have insurance, you have to pay people. Well, it depends on what your organisation does. Your organisation. One of your KPI's is absolutely to create employability so we don't use volunteers. We want to employ people, local people. The values in decreased over the last two years by about 50%. We're seeing a 35%

reduction whilst overheads increase, you get to the point of managing decline and it's not good you know. So I think the hard work that's been put in in the last decade in relation to reuse and recycling. You know, cost of living crisis has affected it. I don't think there's recognition of that. I guess is what I'm saying.

Athan Lewes, EALA Impacts:

I'm just going to quickly say one thing. One thing that we've observed and it's interesting about how things are valued is that.

Often, policy makers want one thing to increase, but don't account the fact that you need to stop another thing happening. And so, for instance, like the ambition to create more social enterprises, get back to the purpose of why we're all here.

You kind of need to make doing making you know making a for profit less attractive somehow. You know you need to reduce a thing to, because then you then you change the balance of what people value. So for instance, the circular economy it's very difficult to make a reuse remanufactured thing valuable versus you know, a kind of free and easy linear economy.

If you make the linear economy so something like, OK, you know that thing is a very high carbon item. You know, if we did things that stopped new build being so free and easy. You would find a lot more repair, maintenance, renovation of existing buildings, and it's the same with the furniture. If we actually priced in these externalities of cheap furniture made abroad, blah blah blah.

The price of that goes up, which then rebalances, and so it's how we sometimes need to do a thing that that kind of blocks a good thing to rebalance the value, to enable, to enable a good thing to happen. I think that's what we definitely see in construction, and I'd imagine it's somewhere in furniture.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

Definitely Ariana and I were actually in in Findhorn yesterday at the Eco Village and we were talking about the concrete and the 'Woodcrete' that you can use and how different the substances in terms of being towards net zero carbon neutral. And yet the price is very almost offset by the taxes you pay on concrete, but not quite. So if we could just tax it a little bit more than it would be cheaper to use the right material. Yeah, that's an even playing field.

Daniel Fisherm Greyfriars Charteris Centre:

I'm Daniel from the Greyfriars Charteris Centre. As Jo and Aythan mentioned, community buildings owned by local authorities are in increasing states of deterioration and communities are facing difficult sort of decisions whether to take on an asset transfer or see their community spaces close and there's been some various research ongoing about this and wealthier communities are often more willing to cope with this sort of imposition.

While more deprived areas, you know the community, the Community buildings are inevitably, inevitably closing. Specific to Edinburgh, the Council seems determined to push its community buildings agenda, offloading the liability onto 3rd sector organisations to maintain these buildings. Whilst still trying to retain them on their books as assets and given the state of the building stock in Scotland, I can't imagine this is an Edinburgh specific problem.

Is there a solution to this? I mean the Transition fund sounds good, but should there be more sort of protections to prevent local authorities offloading liabilities onto 3rd sector organisations?

Linda Gillispie, COSS, DTAS:

I know like that we're beginning to see a wee bit more of that with buildings being up for asset transfer, but on a lease basis but a full repairing lease with the use of Council contractors for any repairs and our advice to a Community group would be not to take an asset on those terms. And when you take all of the liabilities of an asset, why would you not just have ownership so that you've actually got the bit the benefits of actually owning it. So yes, we are seeing those kind of behaviours coming through, but we'd certainly advise against it in terms of the comment you made round about on affluent communities versus deprived communities, certainly our own work in our own stats is that there's equal levels of interest in Community ownership and indeed almost more in deprived communities.

But there's a difference in terms of how they're managing through the process. So we've just Scottish Government funded.

A hub and spoke pilot in Barmulloch in Glasgow and we also replicated that in Inverclyde to see if an experienced, well connected community anchor organisation would be more helpful and get a better outcome for deployed communities to consider the assets available to them. So that research has just been published and it is. You know obviously supports like in a local intervention. So yes, we're not, we're

not there yet with how we can. Support of deprived communities to look at their assets, but we're actually exploring that.

Daniel Fisher, Greyfriars Charteris Centre:

What can we do sort of faced with the, you know, the offers from local authorities saying it's a full repairing obligation lease and you know the advice is to say, OK, well, we're not going to accept that. And the local authority says, OK, that's fine and closes the asset.

Linda Gillispie, COSS, DTAS:

But you've got the Community Empowerment act. You have a framework of rights that the communities can use to secure the assets, and the communities offer the terms and the relevant authorities perfectly entitled to decline that. But there is a programme of appeal which the Community can appeal the decision and ultimately appeal to Scottish ministers and that decision will be taken on balance.

So there's the framework of rights. So if a community is negotiating out with the framework of community rights. It is as you've characterised it, but if you're in the Community asset transfer process, which has been one of the main benefits in terms of that shift of power, then the Community have rights within that.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

And is the appeals process robust enough in your experience?

Linda Gillispie, COSS, DTAS:

I think it has. I think the early-stage appeal. I mean there's obviously the review of the Community Empowerment Act Part 5 was published yesterday, Part 5 and Part 3 yesterday and in the early days there was. All the appeals were going against the communities. I think about the 1st 10 went against the Community decisions and I know the Scottish Government reporters have looked at that and they've kind of looked at the kind of funding models because there was concern around about sustainability. And there was I think there was just a sense that they weren't understanding how the social economy and communities operate and fund themselves. So there's been the last appeals have been in support of communities and there's been, in fact, there's been a successful appeal. Who knew?

So yes, it's it's changed over time. So it feels as if it's it's got more teeth.

Aythan Lewes, EALA Impacts:

Quickly, first off, our presentation was broader in terms of our experiences of just community groups having buildings generally rather than Community asset transfer examples. So we've worked, we've worked with clients doing that, but it was more broadly about community buildings and yeah, so in terms of what we're talking about, it also did include a lot of community or third sector organisations we've worked with who've got leases with public, the public sector and it's absolutely it is shocking the number of them who have FRI leases and just think, oh, it's OK when the roof goes, the council come back and sort it because it's a council building. You know this. There's a lot of, if it's a local authority for some reason, people just think they'll be nice and friendly and helpful and then we're working with organisations who, you know, the bad thing happens. And then the Council's like, well, look at, you know, clause 15a or whatever it is, you know this is your problem and we're dealing with people at the other end of that. People who are, you know, who've got local authority buildings on FRI leases and we're now having to help them fundraise for repairing the roof over their head and they're providing frontline services.

So there does seem to be this assumption that because the Council for landlord, there'll be a nice, friendly landlord. You know that I'm who says they should be and it's a contract, but no one seemed, you know, I know. Sorry. DTAS that you guys you guys are now providing that advice in which I think I think it's fantastic. It was great to hear what you guys are what you guys are doing is but that if you're out with that kind of detached environment, there's a lot of other third sector organisations out there without a lot of support.

Linda Gillispie, COSS, DTAS:

I think the way that you've described that that that's a historic way where there's been kind of peppercorn leases and a much more benign environment. But as funding has contracted, it's certainly changed.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

I think there is often an assumption as well that Oh well, we'd all get angry about it and the Council would have to fall. But actually, that doesn't always go that way. I think we've got a comment or question online.

Andy Paterson, Social Enterprise Scotland:

Yeah, Arianne, you said you wanted to come in.

Ariane Burgess, MSP:

Yeah, thanks. I'm maybe going to take the conversation to a different place, but Linda, this this is going to come towards you. So as Emma mentioned, we were at the Eco village near Findhorn yesterday and some of the time we were there, we spent time with Alec Walker and Facil from Ecopia and one of the things that I love about what they're doing is a lot of the rural island housing funds. They've got a lot of affordable housing there and they've been able to tap into the rural Island Housing fund there and you need a match funding there.

So the fund only funds 60% and so they've got something really good going on in terms of. So I just want to bookmark, let's not lose sight of what Amanda Grimm talked about in terms of the Community Wealth fund from wind energy. But what Copia's doing is tapping into wealth in a community. And I just and through the what do they call community shares?

And I just wonder how we can kind of like get every community in Scotland, certainly I'd be keen in the rural islands and islands where you've got potentially people moving in with bringing their retirement money, some wealth they love the place, they don't necessarily want to roll up their sleeves and get involved in that way, but that they could invest. So, I'd love to. I just got a sense of how can, I know it's working a bit here and there, with the buyout, the pub and things like that. But I just wonder how we can get that community shares piece catalysed more and see that as you know the wealth in the community can actually help the community.

Linda Gillispie, COSS, DTAS:

I know spending time with Alex, always very energising. Alex was the chair of DTAS for about a decade and is obviously a huge proponent of community shares. I mean, community shares. Scotland sits under the detest umbrella. So, there's been about £18,000,000 of community shares raised over that's been rolled into a new kind of brand and programme that's widening out called Democratic Finance Scotland, which is bringing all of that type of money within the envelope, you know, Community benefits, legacy giving, philanthropic giving and it will just be it's looking to bring that through. Now there's the programme is just has just launched, so my colleagues are we kind of working on that and we're obviously kind of working with local energy

Scotland. So, there's kind of a lot of activity, quite early-ish stages at the moment, but we are aiming to do exactly that Ariane.

Ariane Burgess, MSP:

That's great news. I look forward to hearing more about it.

Joanna McClelland, EALA Impacts:

Just that quickly, this is sort of a small scale sort of initiative that's happening in Edinburgh. So we were sort of Co-founded a volunteer network called 'EdinBric' Edinburgh Building retrofit and Improvement Collective.

Sort of came together after conversations after COP 26. So, there's sort of nascent community groups, existing community groups. So, it's one in Portobello. There's one in Trinity and one of them in Bruntsfield, the sort of the co-founding groups so they have existing groups of residents and the ones that we do spend the majority of time speaking to in those areas are retired.

So, they do are offering capacity in terms of their conversations and their ability to pull their neighbours together and pull their streets together and they are the ones that are stepping forward 1st and doing things like the building survey and trying to figure out what flagship projects they can lead to, then pass on to the rest of their community.

So I'll be doing something like quite a simple one, like maybe just doing the solar panels for their roof, but they're because they're in a row of terraces and tenement houses they can copy the plans and literally give the plan to the next door neighbour to kick start something and move it forward in a sort of shared capacity.

They're sort of the scale of maybe 2 hundreds and 150. Is that sort that sort of thing right now. But because they're going first and there's an umbrella of EdinBric above them where they're able to do road shows, if you like, we walk around the community groups and community parks and community events and tell other communities about what these initiatives are doing and then help build up their little capacity that they can then come forward and do something themselves. So I think the sometimes the as was just another example maybe where the value might be used is actually in time and capacity to have availability to. Kickstart things and do the flag leaflet drops in the streets and turn up in the community halls.

Aythan Lewes, EALA Impacts:

One quick question, quick story. I was going to add in is it's interesting one about community shares. There is a little bit of nervousness we have around that because we're speaking with a solar Co-op and it turned out that they were looking to use the roofs of a more deprived part of the city for solar panels where the shares were all owned by people from an affluent part of the city, and so you have this kind of all right, I'm not quite sure I'm comfortable with that, but it's interesting. We spoke to your colleagues at Democratic Finance Scotland and they were totally switched on about that kind of accidental extraction of something that on the surface might look all well and good, but you know this idea that you know each owner has a vote, regardless of how many shares they have, and these sorts of things, you know, so we're quite keen to just watch out. There's not this accidental extraction where it's not very just transition.

In the in the kind of financial stakes. So, yeah, that's something we're all just kind. Of a bit cautious about.

Linda Gillispie, COSS, DTAS:

Nobody wants that

Emma Roddick, MSP:

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We're close to running out of time, but I was actually going to ask if people have specific questions for Amanda or Fergus, because you've not spoken quite as much.

Amanda Grimm, Community Energy Scotland:

Briefly on that, yeah, just on the community share, so. Yes, it's a fantastic thing and communities have raised over 10 million in community share offers just for community renewable energy projects, including the hydro in Balerno, near Edinburgh. They raised all the money, all the finance they needed for that hydro scheme through a community share offers and no public funding was needed. So. Democratic finances supporting more communities to do that, but I was gonna make a point similar to Aythan's that.

We'd be wary about.

If you don't provide additional support targeted at communities who have the least capacity and the least free time and well and money to put into community shares is

just going to entrench inequality. So we have been calling for additional capacity, building funding targeted at communities with the least resource and that is something that the Scottish Community Well fund could provide. It could have that capacity building funding scheme to complement all the good work already doing being done in communities through community share offers. Yep, thanks.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

I can see a hand online. It's gone.

Andy Paterson, Social Enterprise Scotland:

Yeah, there is a question in the chat. "What about local communities taking direct ownership of a community asset and then selling the community service provided back to the local council? In effect, the local council would pay the Community group for providing the community service by contractual free or stipend."

Emma Roddick, MSP:

You look thoughtful, David.

Linda Gillispie, COSS, DTAS:

I mean, if I'm being truthful, we thought Part 3 participation requests in the Community Empowerment Act was going to be the smoking gun for exactly that and we had a couple of development trust members. Who were looking at leisure trusts, business plans and thinking. Well, we could take that leisure trust. Run it, and we'll also take the budget to run it under a participation request. And obviously, that's not how participation requests have rolled out. I think this is beginning to come to the fore some of the look, there's been some movement in libraries.

Over the years, but it's been at the margins and we're seeing library services. A number of local authorities are looking to close that, so this is the question that's been. By communities about particularly over that. I think it's quite a difficult environment to get a service level agreement with the service certainly in libraries there's lots of in kind support coming through and certainly there would be scope to ask for that, but I'm we're not seeing any kind of.

Significant service level agreements coming with the actual delivery of services. We'll

have to finish in a positive question after that.

Daniel Fisher, Greyfriars Charteris Centre:

I was just going to say we offered to Edinburgh Council to do that and they in a very long and slow way, said fat chance. We weren't actually asking them for money. We were just asking them. We said we'll run the space for you and we expect you to, you know, maintain the building, but it quickly moved from a service agreement to they wanted to offload full repairing liability because they slipped back into type. You know, as they seem to do with every community space.

Dan Rous, Community Dan:

Hi. Thanks. Dan Wells aka Community Dan and a very foundational level. I'm working with a lot of groups who are at very early stage of even formation of it being a group and you know they know this this funding even to get viability, grants and things like this. But the one thing they lack is a bank account.

While there are and you know it's the hub and spoke models are great and there are some cases where they can partner with another organisation to get that at least to start with that's obviously not a long term solution and some are going, you know, up to upwards of a year of issues, certainly in in rural locations, but not necessarily rural. I've got one I'm supporting right here in Edinburgh that's struggling to get a bank account where you know there are a new group coming together.

They have nothing to show for themselves, and yet the banks are saying, well, we need your accountant to give us this. We don't have an accountant, so, you know, maybe something some of these, these groups that are formed from early stages, any experience from that? Any advice from DTAS, even from Scottish Government about?

Solutions.

I mean the big question solutions for the banking sector, that's not for tonight, but in this particular one of these groups that want to take things off. But this is a major hurdle for them at a starting point 'cause, they can't get that funding Cos they don't have that bank account to put in.

Linda Gillispie, COSS, DTAS:

No, I know. And we've picked that up as well SCVO have done. I'm sure it's SCVO have done a guide and bank accounts quite recently and they've gone through all the banks.

But you're right, I mean you actually answered your own questions out of advice we had the same experience as you and for those groups that are looking at the exploratory stage then we are they are looking to piggyback the community council for their bank account or another local organisation that can hold the grant funding. I mean it's not ideal, but but it's like in a work around.

David Paton, Montrose Playhouse:

Yeah, I'll probably just reiterate that. So, 12 years ago when we started Montreal's Playhouse, we were lucky enough to have one of our volunteers is an accountant. So obviously, they helped us with that, that whole process. But even they were finding that a really challenging task to set that initial bank account.

More recently last year, when we set up promo, which is the town centre of Regeneration project in Montrose, we used the local Community Council as the vehicle and a couple of the team were actually on the Community Council. So, it actually made that actually made that really, really easy with support through Angus Council's community officers.

But again, we were lucky enough that another accountant came on board and gave up his time to kind of help us kind of move that forward. And now we're we've got our bank account, we've got, we're set up as a CIC. And if you have that support from local volunteers who have that professional experience.

Then yeah, it's a little bit easier, but again, even he found that a really difficult working with I think it was Virgin Bank. They were trying to get the bank through because we've only got Virgin bank left in Montrose now. So yeah, it is a challenging, challenging thing to do, but there are there are support if you maybe want to speak to like local accountants and financial advisors and you know, these types of people.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

I'm going to bring in Fergus, then we'll come to you and then we're coming to the hand online.

Fergus Christie, Isla of Gigha:

Yeah, we had a similar problem because I think the problem about voluntary organisations or you know whatever you want to call them is they don't fit the banking model. I remember meeting with the bank, which will remain nameless and trying to explain that this was a community under asset and we had lots of tangible assets not interested at all. Not interested in the ongoing ramifications of the effect on people's lives, etcetera. No interest whatsoever. It was just how quickly can you repay give us your accounts etcetera. Give us you're your accounts, give us your books, whatever it was, we were slightly fortunate in that we had a bit of history, so we didn't have the problems that you're encountering. But unfortunately the reality is you need to fit the business model and wearing a completely different hat. At Edinburgh University there are various student organisations on a very low scale, but they organise small events and they can't get bank accounts either. So I'm sorry, that's a bit pessimistic.

Scott Mould, Cunninghame Housing Association:

Sorry I'm I think I said earlier. I'm also chair development trust we say up and at Ardrossan on the West Coast and we used a community bank initially that was a good end for us with a credit union and then we developed into a bigger bank account. They can deal with your transactions up to a certain level with the issue. So we've got to a level where we're exceeding that. We then had to move to. So that that transition to a bigger bank account was much easier going through that Ave. So we ended up with Virgin as well. Virgin are very good with charities, so.

Andy Paterson, Social Enterprise Scotland:

David, do you want to come in?

David Somervell, Cohousing Scotland:

Thank you, friends. We've heard about the Church of Scotland and many faith groups selling off their property, their churches Belfield in Portobello is one such which was awarded the first urban community land transfer community asset transfer. The UK government, previous government, had a thing called Community ownership, which allocated funds across the UK.

Belfield, as a an action party, won £450'000. It just opened a share offer so to end on a positive note. When enough people get together it is possible to beat the system

and to achieve the sort of society we want and I encourage you to look up Bellfield Community share offer. They're looking to raise £200,000 to enable them to increase the hall space available to that community. Thank you.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

Thank you for that. That was a very positive note to end on and I actually don't see any more hands. So that's lovely that we've managed to end on that kind of note. We are now going to move on then just to any other business. If people had anything to raise? On you go.

Duncan Thorp, Social Enterprise Scotland:

It's just that an action from a previous CPG, which was to write to the First Minister about the funding and investment survey which we the CPG conducted with social Enterprise Scotland a few weeks ago. So we've written that letter now. So we're just waiting on a response from the First Minister, so it should be a couple of weeks, I think, to get that back.

Aythan Lewes, EALA Impacts:

We spoken, I think, mostly to yourself about this group and it's kind of, you know, the ongoing initiatives and I think that letter is like a good example of that. Like that was something raised at a previous one.

So it's just a, it's just a question you know with that with that action having moved on is there you know, are there other kind of like you know two or three ongoing things from this from this group we can get an update on?

I think we've said before we're through Joe's roles, where members of the Cross Party group on Tenement Act, and obviously that's been known for ages and it's got this good ongoing kind of continual thread and yeah. So I'm just wondering if you guys have other things on the list that you're doing?

Duncan Thorp, Social Enterprise Scotland:

We were keen on actions from the group as well as that letter is one example from one CPG. So every CPG meeting we're trying to get some kind of action, it could be a letter or it could be something else. Well, that's the survey, for example, was an action from another CPG as well, just that actually launching that survey, which was

really good, but also any suggestions you have as well, if you've got any suggestions of actions with this group can take, please just pass them on to myself and Andy 'cause, I'm quite keen on.

On it being more action orientated, not just discussions which are useful in themselves of course, but you know we are quite keen on that as well. So yeah, and if any ideas you have please come let us know.

Andy Paterson, Social Enterprise Scotland:

Yeah and I would just add to that, the Community wealth building bills just been published and not to dictate the next topic of the CPG. We'll run that past our policy advisory group. But, chances are we will be talking about Community wealth building though. So anything that we collect there as well, we can send as a response and evidence to anyone who looks at that bill.

Emma Roddick, MSP:

And I would say as well, you know, I know Ariana and I are both Highlands and Islands, but we Co convene this group because we've got such an interest in social enterprise, and we do want to know what the problems are. And both of us are not strangers to trying to amend bills.

So, if we are picking up on things via the CPG, then that that can also be a a kind of personal action from us. And I see that she's got her hand up too.

Ariane Burgess, MSP:

I was saying that I think there might be an action tonight. I'm not. I mean, it was. It seemed like we had quite a chunk of time talking around circular economy and I really liked what we said at one point that we need to make the linear economy less attractive.

And something in there and I just wonder if there's an action point that we maybe need a bit of help with around and doing something that pushes the circular economy more to the fore.

Sorry, I don't know what's going on. I've had a very interesting evening with my computer, but yeah, so something around, how do we kick start and support the social enterprise?

Kind of circular economy piece and is there do we need a fund for that kind of transition or something like that?

Emma Roddick, MSP:

Three funds that we're trying to set up this evening, but yes, we'll back to EALA.

Aythan Lewes, EALA Impacts:

If we just say like the way the way that we connect these concepts is that we, would we see the circle economy is not really necessarily strictly a materials thing that social enterprises are circular, they are part of the circular economy, they keep, they keep resources within them. And so growing social enterprise, strengthening social enterprise is in itself and promoting the circular economy. So just thinking of the circular economy and strictly material terms, I think is kind of limiting its impact as a concept. And so yeah, we would, we would push the fact that everyone here who's a social enterprise it is, is enacting the circular economy and so efforts to to grow more social enterprises and restrict extractive enterprises, once for bad phrase, is, is is growing the circle economy. So, these two things are very, very closely linked.

Ariane Burgess, MSP:

Yes, so what's the action that we need, I mean?

Duncan Thorp, Social Enterprise Scotland:

I was just going to say there is a circular economy, CPG. So, we were speaking to them. Maybe first we could do that, maybe have a joint CPG with them potentially?

Joanna McClelland, EALA Impacts:

We have an we have an e-mail that was sent out to the Ms, PS and councillors. We'll be delighted to send on to you as well.

Emma Roddick, MP:

Yeah. And I think that that kind of goes back to the, you know, you can beat the system comment, doesn't it because probably everybody in the room has beaten the

system and that's what we're trying to do is also change the system and break the system. So, let's keep getting on with that.

Next meeting is Tuesday, 17th of June. Again, same time 6:00pm and we're in committee room 4. So just downstairs.

Thank you all very much, particularly to the speakers for all your contributions tonight. I think that was really interesting and I'm sure everybody else got as much out of it as I did. Thank you very much for joining us.