



COMMUNITY*
LAND SCOTLAND

**Evaluating Post-Monopoly Rural Land Ownership: Four
Community Case-Studies**

A Paper

Professor Mike Danson

July 2023¹

Land and the Common Good

¹ The research and writing of this paper took place in 2022.

A discussion paper series on land reform in Scotland

Land and the Common Good

A discussion paper series on land reform in Scotland

This series is intended to stimulate informed discussion and debate on land reform in Scotland through the publication of independent papers on a wide range of issues from different perspectives. Its overarching aim is to explore the multi-faceted relationship between land ownership and land use in pursuit of the common good. The views expressed in the papers are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of Community Land Scotland.

About the Author

Professor Mike Danson is an economist and Professor Emeritus of Enterprise Policy, Heriot-Watt University and Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences. He has published widely on rural, regional and island economies, microbreweries, minority languages, and many other areas with 18 books, 100 book chapters and over 500 papers. Chair of Basic Income Network Scotland, depute Convenor Jimmy Reid Foundation, Trustee of Nordic Horizons and of Community Renewal, Mike was on the Scottish Government's Just Transition Commission and has advised, national and international organisations: OECD, WHO, EC, trades unions and community groups. He lives in the Highlands.

The research on which this paper is based has been supported by funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

© Copyright remains with the author. Fair use terms apply. Material within the paper can be utilised fully for the purposes of education, research or private study; the source of the material is to be acknowledged; copies can be made for non-commercial purposes; making copies of the material available for a number of people should be by reference to the Community Land Scotland website.

Contents

1. Introduction: Setting the Scene	5
West Harris:	6
Abriachan	7
Galson	8
Knoydart.....	10
2. Framework for analysing monopoly ownership, use and management – applied in the context of community wealth building, just transition and land reform	12
Policy and strategy contexts	13
Framework for analysis	16
Summary	18
3. Thematic analysis of evidence from case studies	19
Economic, social and environmental development in the case study areas since buy-out	19
Themes of monopoly powers	22
Economic development and activity.....	22
Prices, wages, costs of living	22
Population.....	24
Housing	27
Economic activity and development:.....	30
Human capital, enterprise, markets and skills.....	33
Diversity	35
Governance and management: Leadership and engagement.....	39
5. Conclusions	41
Bibliography	45
Acknowledgements	47
Appendix 1: Case study communities:	48
Appendix 2: Case study Community Trusts - Aims and objectives	49
Appendix 3: Framework and interview questions	51

Executive Summary

This paper identifies how community land ownership (CLO) has contributed to the sustainable development of four communities in the Highlands and Islands and, in particular, how the economic and governance model of CLO addresses the pre buyout negative impacts of local monopoly land ownership (whether state or private.) A set of indicators are used to discuss the changes that have occurred since community acquisition, and how these changes have contributed to more sustainable and resilient local communities and economies. In essence, this paper details the story of a transition from monopoly to community ownership and, in doing so, clearly articulates the different cultural, economic and social underpinnings of CLO compared to landlordism.

Four communities were studied in detail: Abriachan, Galson, Knoydart and West Harris. These were chosen by the following criteria: scale, to offer diversity of opportunity in their development; length of ownership to enable strong before and after comparisons of the different ownership models; a variety of locations.

The paper considers whether ownership changes to community ownership helps or hinders these essential changes. It asks whether community land ownership:

1. delivers the sustainable land management necessary to reduce climate impacts, particularly focussing on traditional land management and monoculture approaches
2. empowers and strengthen local community resilience, to address short term and long-term shocks
3. helps build local economies, support business growth and improve local incomes
4. helps address depopulation and negative demographic change
5. embeds local community wealth building into the local economy

The paper posits that 'if there is evidence to answer these questions in the affirmative then **the arguments for community ownership being promoted and extended in the interest of the public and the planet become conclusive.**'

The report concludes that community ownership of the four estates has led to further sustainable development, community resilience and local social and economic progress. In terms of jobs, enterprise, income and other economic performance indicators, all four case studies recorded positive and sustained progress. It was clear that for all case studies that

these elements of progress would have been delayed or not happened at all under previous monopoly ownership.

By investing in people, attracting higher quality employment, entrepreneurs and ideas, and through measures to regenerate and revive the natural environment – the case studies detail how communities are demonstrably building sustainable and resilient places addressing the negative impacts of other forms of local monopoly ownership. The paper finishes with the striking conclusion that **‘communities, the economy and the environment cannot afford to wait for market failures to be addressed by the owners of large estates, whether private, state or NGOs’.**

1. Introduction: Setting the Scene

Scoping the classic effects of monopolies within concentrated patterns of rural land ownership

In Danson (2020), a framework was constructed to analyse the implications of concentrations of land ownership, use and management for delivering sustainable land use outcomes. The development of the framework was informed by economic theories of monopoly to identify a set of expected negative and positive features of monopoly powers over the ownership, use and management of land and land resources. These were presented in terms of expected impacts on the local community and on the wider economy, society and environment. This paper applies that framework to four separate community owned estates to:

- assess the significance of collective ownership of the land asset in contributing to the sustainable development of each community
- evaluate sustainability impacts within each community across a range of indicators on the basis of available relevant data

The objective here is to determine how the four case study estates have been developing in sustainable ways after ownership passed to the community. Of particular interest is how the communities have been addressing each of these potential impacts of monopoly power, and within the context of the challenges and recommendations established in policies and strategies proposed to pursue a just transition to net-zero, community wealth building and building local resilience. In other words, this research assesses whether the transfer of ownership has been to the benefit or cost of the community and wider interests in terms of creating sustainable, resilient, and inclusive places. This objective is approached through a set of research questions (Appendix 3: A – H in the ‘Research questions’ column) which cover each of the issues derived from the economic theories of monopoly powers. Effectively, these research questions have been developed to address all the potential impacts with some covering more than one issue as shown (see ‘Addresses features’ column).

The study involves a combination of desk research and a small number of online interviews with key stakeholders from within each participating community which took place in

February 2022. The paper introduces the framework, presents, and analyses the themes, synthesises the evidence, and concludes with a summary of the main themes emerging from the preceding discussion.

The criteria for selecting the case study communities were:

- large scale landholdings: to offer diversity of opportunities in their development
- well-established: to facilitate comparisons before and after transfer to community ownership
- varied previous ownership types: including public/state bodies and private estates
- location: mainland and island
- mixed (new) governance/directors: including community, NGOs, non-residents; gender and age; appointed/elected
- remote rural category: accessible and remote

The four community case studies are located in West Harris, Abriachan, Galson, Knoydart (Appendix 1). A brief description of these sites is now mapped against these criteria, along with an initial assessment of each before their ownership was transferred.

West Harris:

West Harris estate covers 19,100 acres and 'is a very special place: the spectacular beaches, flower-rich machair and local culture make it a much sought after holiday location and a very enviable place to live' (<https://www.westharristrust.org/>). In 2010, West Harris was the first community to purchase its crofting estate from the Scottish Government, the previous owner. As with many of the buy-out communities, this is a 'remote rural' area and so faces many of the challenges of its location at the north-west of Europe of isolation, harsh climate and distance from markets and suppliers. The responsibility for managing this land on the west side of Harris is held by the West Harris Trust, a community charity with a board elected by local people. With a population of about 120 people after buy-out, spread between the crofting townships of Losgaintir, Seilebost, Horgabost, Na Buirgh and Sgarasta Mhor, the area is nearly all under crofting tenure either as 52 individual crofts or 4 common grazings (<https://www.communitylandscotland.org.uk/members/west-harris-trust/>).

Reflecting past declines in the economy and population, the plan for West Harris is based

around the creation and improvement of housing, employment opportunities, renewable energy, and sustainable development. The Trust believes that 'a long history of declining population and limited opportunities can be turned around by local endeavour and that there is a bright future for our 150-strong community' (<https://www.westharristrust.org/>).

Capturing the aspirations of the community, the key aims of the Trust are to:

- Revitalise the community by attracting new residents and creating new housing and employment opportunities
- Create environmentally sustainable energy for the community via small hydro and micro-wind projects
- Conserve and increase understanding of our stunning natural heritage

As will be argued later from interviews with representatives of the Community Trust, these were not aims held for the community before the buy-out. To progress these, current projects include:

- A 100kw small hydro scheme
- Additional motorhome and caravan hook-ups at Pairc Niseaboist
- Sale of housing plots for self-build by people moving into/returning to the area

These represent concrete evidence of initiatives that promise to reverse past decline and deliver sustainable developments locally.

Abriachan

Covering 1,334 acres of mostly woodland, Abriachan is the smallest of the case study estates and was formerly owned by Forestry Commission Scotland until it was bought by the community almost quarter of a century ago in 1998. Located close to Inverness, it is designated as an 'accessible rural area' according to the Scottish Government's classification being within a 30-minute drive time of a Settlement of 10,000 or more. The community of about 130 people is fairly scattered high above the shores of Loch Ness, halfway between Inverness and Drumnadrochit. It has 'a rich cultural and literary landscape and [is] a part of a diverse bio-region, reflecting on different creative, poetic and aesthetic ways of being in this place'. Unlike the other case study estates, and while there are still some active crofts, the

majority of inhabitants, the population is about 130, are employed in Inverness and beyond: it is effectively a commuting settlement.²

The Abriachan Forest Trust is managed by a board elected by local members and this governance structure and the community it represents are both quite different compared with the estate when it was purchased from Forest Enterprise (FE) in the late 1990s. In 1996, Forestry Enterprise invited community councils to comment on the effects of potential sales of forest on local community rights and the local Abriachan community council had expressed concerns over the possibility of losing long-standing rights of access. When the estate was subsequently put up for sale, there was no recognition of these stated concerns including traditional rights to common grazings and peat-banks (<http://www.caledonia.org.uk/socialland/abriacha.htm>). The results of the community consultation process had in effect been ignored, according to this report, suggesting an incapacity of Forest Enterprise to listen to the local community and so to protecting these rights. This and the strong local interest in natural history and conservation encouraged the community into action, learning from the success of the Assynt crofters' campaign to buy their own land, with a steering group being established and then evolving into a Company Limited by Guarantee, the Abriachan Forest Trust Ltd.³

The local school closed in 1958 so local children now attend Dochgarroch Primary and either Charleston Academy in Inverness or Glenurquhart High School in Drumadrochit. Overcoming the lack of a centre in such a township, as a social enterprise, the Abriachan Forest Trust has managed the land 'to create local employment, improve the environment and encourage its enjoyment by the public through a network of spectacular paths, family suited mountain bike trails, innovative outdoor learning as well as health and well-being opportunities' (<http://www.abriachan.org.uk/who-we-are/>), offering a different path to sustainable development from the stagnation under state ownership and realising the advantages of being located close to the city and on busy tourism trails.

Galson

Galson is the largest of the case studies both in terms of land, extending to 56,000 acres, and population, with nearly 2000 inhabitants. Purchased from private owners in 2007, this is

² <https://www.abriachan.org.uk/who-we-are/>

³ <https://www.oscr.org.uk/about-charities/search-the-register/charity-details?number=SC025690>

a 'remote rural area' community of coast, agricultural land and moor in the North West of the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. The estate comprises 22 villages running from Upper Barvas to Port of Ness. At the time of purchase, the Estate 'was under private ownership with minimal estate management or development' (<https://www.galsontrust.com/buyout>). Prior to the buy-out, detailed analyses and preparatory work was undertaken with a feasibility study to identify the economic, social, and environmental potential of the Estate, analysing the estate's existing assets, operations and business, the development options and the opportunities presented. Essential to progressing such development, and in contrast to the governance and management under the existing ownership, this involved 'a wide-ranging community-based review and assessment of community requirements' along with discussion and dissemination events and initiatives. These preparations meant establishing Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn (Galson Estate Trust), membership criteria and an elected Board of Directors who led on the pursuit of funds to purchase the estate. On 12th January 2007, the day chosen to symbolise the start of a new year and a new era for the community, the buy-out celebrations began at Galson Farm; a location closely associated with the tumultuous events of the 19th Century in this area (<https://www.galsontrust.com/significant-milestones-1>). As with the other case studies, heritage and the significance of time and place were recognised and relevant to the event of change of ownership, echoing traditional importance of stewardship of the land and the people, the environment, and the future.

Built into the Trust's aims and objectives, and indeed its philosophy and practices, 'the Urras strives to involve the whole community in its decision-making process through ongoing consultations and communication. The overarching vision is to build a sustainable future for the communities of the Galson Estate' (<https://www.galsontrust.com/community-engagement>). To fund local initiatives, a Community Renewable Energy Project has been developed coupled with income from commercial developments. The income streams flowing from these investments are planned to enable the Urras to give back to the community. As in the establishment of the Trust, the current strategic plan for Galson has been generated through extensive and professional consultations with the community, adopting best practice from the field. With the importance of stabilising and then growing the population, the economy and protecting the environment, particular attention is paid

throughout their activities in community, and especially youth, engagement; this is complemented by the *sunnd*⁴ Health and Wellbeing programme which confirms that business alone is not the only objective of a community-owned estate.

Knoydart

Perhaps the most remote community on the British mainland, the Knoydart peninsula in the Lochaber district on the West coast of the Scottish Highlands is situated between Loch Nevis and Loch Hourn and is the archetypal 'remote rural area' under Scottish Government categorisation. The peninsula comprises approximately 55,000 acres and is now divided up amongst a number of landowners, with the largest area community owned and managed by the Knoydart Foundation. The Foundation gained ownership of the estate's 17,500 acres, residential properties, a hydro-electric scheme and many old buildings. As the Foundation notes, 'All these assets were in very poor condition, and it has taken many years of hard work to bring them back into working condition. The local community own and manage the Foundation through a board comprising 5 members elected by the community, along with representatives of Highland Council, the Chris Brasher Trust, and John Muir Trust'

<https://www.visitknoydart.co.uk/kf>).

As with many other such communities, Knoydart suffered from absentee landlordism, the effects of the Clearances, evictions, and continuing neglect over many decades

<https://www.visitknoydart.co.uk/history>). However, these challenges to maintaining economic and social lives were often met by resistance and rebellion, including the 1948 'Seven Men of Knoydart' land raids which, although unsuccessful, inspired the community and 'set the groundwork which led to the eventual community buyout at the turn of the millennium'.

The Foundation has pursued an ambitious agenda on behalf of the community including improving housing, establishing a Ranger service, leasing land and buildings for local enterprise, and improving water and sewage services. It has two wholly owned trading subsidiaries: Knoydart Renewables which provides clean, green power through its own hydro-electric scheme (there is no connection to the national grid locally), and Knoydart Trading which manages the bunkhouse, undertakes venison processing and merchandise

⁴ Scottish Gaelic: 1. Joy, cheerfulness, hilarity 2. Sprightliness 3. Health, fitness

sales. Both trading subsidiaries are managed by volunteers. Collectively, these are self-supporting enterprises and generate over £300k for the local economy, support local businesses and provide employment for over 15 people. Further initiatives are ongoing such as setting up an independent community interest company to undertake maintenance work on its properties. The Foundation works closely with Knoydart Forest Trust, a community-led company with charitable status, who manage the community's woodlands as well as those owned by private landowners to bring environmental, economic and social benefits to the community and wider public. Most recently the community has taken the Old Forge Pub under community ownership.

Section 3 below provides a detailed analysis of how these case study communities have developed post their respective buy-outs and how they are addressing the interconnected issues of land reform, resilience, the climate emergency, providing affordable housing and income opportunities for local and incoming folk.

2. Framework for analysing monopoly ownership, use and management – applied in the context of community wealth building, just transition and land reform

Over recent times, there have been applications of different terms to characterise the status of ‘sustainable communities’, including ‘resilient’ and ‘inclusive’, and there are similar discussions regarding ‘sustainable development’. It is important to ensure that these terms are addressing the same sorts of definitions of economic, demographic, social, environmental and other characteristics before using and borrowing measures, targets, performances, etc. between them. As more governments and agencies adopt the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the bases for strategy and policy development (Scottish Government, 2021) and also recognise the necessary interactions and conflicts between pursuing each goal within their own contexts, so there should be greater appreciation of the issues, challenges and needs for common approaches and indicators. HIE (Highlands and Islands Enterprise), for example, as the main economic and community development agency for the Highlands and Islands, aims to *‘build a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy’* across the region. Key within HIE’s mission is *‘Increasing the role of communities in the ownership and management of land and assets’*

(<https://www.hie.co.uk/support/support-for-community-organisations/community-assets/>)

and HIE has a long-established role in supporting and promoting community land ownership. Complementing this, HIE has adopted a strategic approach around sustainability (<https://www.hie.co.uk/support/support-for-community-organisations/>) with ‘resilience’ as a key driver, and this has increased the focus on enhancing the resilience of the most remote and rural areas through leading on growing the social economy regionally. Many other authorities and organisations active in the region – including, for example, Community Land Scotland, Highland Council and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Scottish Islands Federation, and other voluntary sector bodies – have similar objectives and development goals.

These objectives, the applications and findings of research on ‘resilience’ and ‘inclusive’ growth can all be utilised in this study of ‘sustainable communities’ and considered as complementary and consistent with both the community wealth building and the just transition agenda.

Having confirmed how these drivers and interventions are seen as vital to create sustainable, resilient, inclusive communities under collective ownership, this section introduces the related concepts of community wealth building, just transition and land reform as they now increasingly influence the policy and strategic environments for communities in rural Scotland. The degrees to which these are mutually reinforcing has come to the fore during the Covid pandemic as community landowners have led the generation of responses to the climate emergency (Macaulay and Dalglish, 2021); but also, as corporate 'Green Lairds' (Macfarlane, 2021) and those thought to be escaping metropolitan living (Hutton, 2021) have come to disrupt local land, housing and related markets, and so land use and management.

Policy and strategy contexts

Community wealth building is an evolving approach where local 'anchor institutions' apply economic and other levers 'to create a more resilient local economy, with more diverse businesses, to create more well-paid jobs for local people' (NAC, 2020). Anchor institutions are often relatively large-scale employers, usually the largest purchasers of goods and services in the locality, and - especially apposite in Scotland's remote and large estates - they control large areas of land and/or otherwise have relatively fixed assets. The key terms underpinning their interventions under such a community wealth building approach are 'fair', 'resilient', 'inclusive', 'wellbeing' and 'Climate Emergency'. Therefore, North Ayrshire has an 'ambitious' economic strategy that supports 'local businesses, new businesses and entrepreneurship, and creates new democratic models of ownership to deliver good, well-paid jobs, using our publicly owned land and assets for the common good and as an enabler for a vibrant, democratic economy' (NAC, 2020). Also directly linking these objectives, the Just Transition Commission (JTC, 2021) placed particular emphasis on the role of communities, especially in rural Scotland, in moving Scotland to have 'net-zero emissions' by 2045; community wealth building and land reform delivered by various interest and expert groups are used to argue that fairness and climate ambition must go hand in hand. While climate action plans can bring multiple benefits, including quality green jobs and improved social inclusion, there is a strong underlying argument that, to ensure acceptance and approval of these changes, people and local communities must be involved in their delivery: 'shaped by Scotland's citizens, not imposed on them' (JTC, 2021). Explicitly, the institutions

of a just transition and community wealth building must energise social partnerships and local democracy, and so develop places and communities that are designed for net-zero and improved wellbeing. Both the JTC and NAC propose that consumers need to be empowered to choose local products, such as sustainably produced food and drink, so that supply chains can be (re)established locally to promote sustainability and resilience. In the context of energy supplies, each of these bodies suggested electricity providing zero-carbon energy for many household energy needs, with the distribution of costs and benefits associated with localised flexible, renewable electricity needing to be fair.

A successful transition therefore will have communities of well-informed, respected consumers, who are able to engage with future energy systems, with economic opportunities embedded locally to ensure a place-based approach which links together the distinct business, labour market, natural, environmental and social assets, opportunities and challenges of any area (NAC, 2020; JTC, 2021). A question for this study is whether community ownership of land facilitates such developments.

JTC (2021) demonstrates that place and community are fundamental to delivering a just transition, while market forces often present barriers to achieving this. Current fuel inflation is exacerbating inequalities: rural and islands communities are especially vulnerable to increases in the cost of heating due to the prevalence of housing stock with poor energy efficiency in these areas, combined with limited choice of feasible heating systems. Similarly, rural and remote car users may not have public transport options yet may have little choice but to switch to electric vehicles. These and other considerations strengthen the arguments for acknowledging and managing competing priorities for how land is used: ‘there is a need for robust governance frameworks for preventing conflicts, resolving them when they arise and, in general, encouraging a more participatory approach to land use decisions and management’. Many of the instruments to facilitate these changes are already in place to: ‘help national and local government, communities, landowners and stakeholders work together to find ways to optimise land use in a fair and inclusive way - meeting local and national objectives and supporting the journey to net zero’.⁵

⁵ <https://blogs.gov.scot/rural-environment/2021/02/05/working-together-to-maximise-the-potential-of-our-land/>

However, where there are monopoly powers over land use and management, essential changes are constrained and delayed (Danson, 2020; Scottish Land Commission, 2021). Notably, ‘many land use decisions made over the last few decades have had a negative impact on biodiversity so that investing in peatland and woodlands can (and must) be done in a way which also supports the restoration of our biodiversity’ – the extent to which community-owned land trusts have addressed this following buy-outs should illustrate whether ownership changes are consistent with and facilitate such progressive decisions.

Building community wealth through a programme of massive investment in restoring peatlands, tree planting and woodland management is required, delivering the benefits for rural communities as well as the environment and planet. Addressing both existing inequalities and injustices associated with land use in Scotland, it is generally accepted that significant investment must flow into land management, from both private and public sources, and in ways that do not replicate the damage done under monopoly use and management systems.

Bodies representing the industry, landowners, government and others (e.g. Kennedy, 2022; JTC, 2021; Scottish Government, 2021) have argued that Scottish farmers and crofters should be supported and empowered to make decisions that are best for individual businesses, for climate change targets and for the wider environment. This raises the question of whether CBOs have offered a model that guarantees such sustainable developments compared with the stagnation and negative impacts of decisions made by monopoly owners hitherto. Promoting a more integrated approach to land management, with more focus on multiple uses/benefits of land, (re)building and strengthening supply chains locally and nationally for agricultural and forestry sectors means re-establishing the connection between consumers and local produce, through integrated food policy; again, an objective for this research is whether CBOs can demonstrate successes in such developments already.

Underpinning community wealth building and community empowerment, and adopted as essential by HIE, Scottish Government and Community Land Scotland, is the ownership of land by the local community:

Through owning and managing land, property and other assets, communities can generate income to advance their own development, creating jobs, providing vital services, building

*and improving houses, and much more. ... Asset-driven projects transform entire communities, and lead to long-term growth.*⁶

In essence, this study aims to assess whether community buy-outs can confirm that, unlike the expectations of theory and practice under monopoly private ownership, use and management of Scotland's resources, they do and will 'deliver the sustainable land management required to reduce climate impact and address the nature emergency'? Does community ownership offer 'to empower and invigorate our communities and strengthen local economies' to deliver community wealth building, resilience and facilitate a just transition through consensus around how land is put to use and managed? If there is evidence to answer these questions in the affirmative, then the arguments for community ownership being promoted and extended in the interest of the public and the planet becomes conclusive.

Framework for analysis

The earlier paper by Danson (2020) provides an indicative framework for identifying key features of monopoly land ownership and their implications for local communities. It is a tool which offers a set of possible positive and negative impacts of monopoly powers when applied to land and can be applied to support communities, agencies and others in decision-making. By identifying impacts of monopoly ownership of land and potential implications for local communities experiencing such conditions, the framework's application should allow such interested parties to systematically consider the implications of concentrations of ownership, use and management in delivering sustainable land use outcomes.

This paper uses a case study approach to explore whether the changes in attitudes, behaviours and so in land use and management have indeed followed when land is transferred to community ownership. It should be noted that analysing what has happened after a community buy-out is complex given the varied drivers and forces at play in social and economic development locally. Such issues as the impacts of Brexit, climate change, national policies and legislation have been affecting all communities and economies, so revealing and isolating how changes in governance and ownership needs to be understood within these wider environments. Data limitations further complicate how to explore

⁶ <https://www.hie.co.uk/support/support-for-community-organisations/community-assets/>

whether and how transfers to community ownership have addressed the impacts of monopoly powers as identified earlier (Danson, 2020). The steps in this process to reveal the implications of community rather than monopoly ownership are: first, a description of the four case study areas, second assessing how the expected impacts of monopoly powers as identified in the framework (Appendix 3: Columns 'Local community impacts' and 'Wider socio-economic impacts') have been addressed and have delivered more beneficial outcomes after each community buy-out. The expected changes in impacts after transfer of large monopoly estates to community ownership have been used to generate research questions for the interviews with representatives of the case studies (Appendix 3: Column 'Research questions'). To inform the analysis, evidence is drawn from official reports and other data and evaluations of the development of the case studies are gathered and analysed to complement these interviews.

In reviewing how the community case studies have been developing, the analysis will be considering changes against the key elements of land markets subject to monopoly powers. Before buy-out, larger estates will tend not to have been run as highly efficient, well paying, innovative businesses and so this research is investigating whether the Community Trusts have overcome this disadvantage of single ownership. Similarly, are community owners selling, diversifying or developing new ventures on the estate, moving away from concentrating on just traditional activities and mono-cultures? Have new business premises been established and barriers to supply chains removed, creating job opportunities - with more firms and higher growth locally? Are more career ladders now presented with fewer truncated by limited capacity for local employers to develop and create higher function positions? To what extent are behaviours and motivations evolving to promote and facilitate environmental sustainability and community resilience?

The negative outcomes of the practices of monopoly landowners then can become embedded into the perceived view of the community, further constraining its own capacity to regenerate. Concentration of ownership, as well as scale, can also lead to these outcomes in local contexts, especially in more remote locations where relative isolation can create conditions of monopoly power.

Some large estates will flourish using tax breaks and other subsidies, previously benefitting from incentives to plant trees, set aside agriculture or otherwise pursue activities that do

not have positive impacts or externalities for the local economy and community. In recent years, repeating and reinforcing the dependency culture that encouraged these public transfers to large scale landowners, UK national policies have been extended to renewable energy facilities which have offered opportunities for wealth generation with few benefits for the locality. Access to capital and owning land are essentials to entering many of these state-driven markets and represent insurmountable barriers for others.

To contribute to the debate on how to use and manage large estates in Scotland, a framework has been presented to facilitate assessment of the potential positive and negative impacts of monopoly powers on communities and on the wider national public interests. This tool can be applied in three different contexts: to consider the efficiencies of the activities of a specific estate; against a set of theoretical outcomes of monopoly ownership of resources and assets; and, to offer a comparison between estimated normal sector performances with the actual outputs from an estate.

These eight research questions have been gathered under different headings on (a) growth and development of the local economy, (b) diversity, (c) costs and prices, (d) skills and people, (e) governance and management, to generate five open-ended questions so that interviewees can respond to requests for information and views in a more natural way than through the theoretical lens of monopoly powers. The evidence from the interviews is used to complement the examination and analysis of a variety of sources including official statistical data, information, reports, etc. as available on each case study community.

Summary

Applying the economic theory of monopoly power to land and resources suggests different potential impacts can be identified and the transfer of ownership to the community can be expected to change and modify these. The potential impacts have been converted into a set of research questions to analyse the extent to which community buy-outs of large estates can benefit, or cost, the community, the local and national economies, and the environment. The assessment is informed by reports from national and regional agencies, accounts of the estates' activities and performances, and supplemented by interviews with key representatives from the four well-established community-owned estates.

3. Thematic analysis of evidence from case studies

As noted above, there are data limitations for analysing small areas in Scotland beyond using the decennial census (and the previous census was in 2011 and the results for the current year will not be available for areas based on the case study estates for a few more years). Following the introduction and description of the four communities in Section 2, this section considers the findings from the data that are available along with the interviews with representatives from each. The framework presented to assess monopoly powers over land and land resources will inform the approach to this analysis.

Economic, social and environmental development in the case study areas since buy-out

Before the local community bought Galson Estate in 2007 it was under private ownership ‘with minimal estate management or development’ (<https://www.galsontrust.com/buyout>). Similarly, West Harris strives for better times through community ownership, use and management: “We believe that a long history of declining population and limited opportunities can be turned around by local endeavour and that there is a bright future for our 150-strong community” (<https://www.westharristrust.org/>). Similarly, in 1999 when the Knoydart ‘community gained control of 17,500 acres, residential properties, a hydroelectric scheme and many old buildings. [Critically] all these assets were in very poor condition and it has taken many years of hard work to bring them back into working condition’. The Abriachan Forest Trust inherited a regular commercial single age-class forestry plantation from Forest Enterprise - and so effectively a monopoly use of the estate – and has transformed this into a multi-purpose forest consisting of four age classes, with significant public access, mountain bike tracks, new native woodland creation, forest classrooms and an award-winning programme of education, skills training and health (mental and physical) activities’ (AFT, 2020).

So, all the case study communities are reporting legacies of neglect, stagnation or decline and these are typical of the inheritance of many other buy-out estates previously under the ownership, use and management of private landlords, or subject to state run bodies headquartered elsewhere and with other priorities (Glass et al., 2019). As captured in the Scottish Government consultation paper: *The Future of Land Reform in Scotland*: ‘in some instances the scale or pattern of land ownership, and the decisions of landowners, can be a barrier to sustainable development in an area’ⁱ. The cataloguing of reasons for private

landowners to own large estates by Glass et al. (2019) highlights that ‘Non-economic motivations can outweigh economic reasons for purchase, particularly for recreation (Petrzelka et al., 2013): when buying an estate, wealthy individuals are willing to pay large sums to gain access to the non-monetary benefits of land ownership (such as leisure or as a ‘hideaway’) (Wagstaff, 2013)’ ... ‘with field sports remaining a common motivation for many new and existing owners’. There is a large literature repeating such observations and analyses, as described in the previous report (Danson, 2020), and by Glass et al. (2019), etc., while other forms of ownership have been at the price of lack of biodiversity and sterilisation of environmental and economic potential.

By way of contrast with the period under private or state ownership, the four case study estates have been actively pursuing sustainable development (Macaulay and Dalglish, 2021). There is no common format or template for presenting their respective aims and objectives, but each of the Community Trusts offers a set of challenges they are seeking to address; these are presented in Appendix 2 in detail and confirm that all four estates capture objectives covering: alleviation of poverty, provision of affordable housing, economic and employment generation, protection and conservation of the environment and biodiversity, health and wellbeing of local people and visitors. The approach and philosophy of each of the Trusts, (Appendix 2) reflect the requirements of a just transition to a net-zero economy and community wealth building by encouraging and creating communities that are themselves sustainable in economic, social and environmental terms, contributing to national and global SDGs. Typical of the community buy-outs, for example, Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn’s (Galson Estate Trust) aims:

To promote, for the public benefit, rural regeneration (following principles of sustainable development, where “sustainable development” means development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs) and the development of the areas of social and economic deprivation within the Galson Estate area of the Isle of Lewis, for the benefit of the Galson Estate Crofting Community.

In West Harris, priorities are gathered under: Housing and Employment, Sustainable Development, Environment, and Heritage. The Knoydart Foundation aims to grow the population, establish more enterprises, improve biodiversity, deepen its resilience by

building a circular economy with self-sufficiency in renewable energy. Abriachan Forest Trust is similarly based on actions to:

- *Improve and sustain the biodiversity of the surrounding area through sensitive land and forest management.*
- *Create and support local employment.*
- *Encourage access for all, with ensuing health and well-being benefits.*
- *Provide and support outdoor learning opportunities for all.*
- *Increase community capacity.*

Essentially, sustainable development - in terms of the economy, community and environment - is key to each of the Trusts, complementing and not conflicting with their local missions and aspirations.

Many of the impacts of former monopoly powers under private and public ownership led to the creation of barriers to achieving the conditions for each of these elements of sustainability. In particular (although for many communities it is not their explicit aim), ensuring a balanced population with the capacity to generate incomes, demand for goods and services to support reasonable levels of provision, with affordable housing and supply chains that capture value added locally and through exports are the essentials for creating and maintaining resilient communities. The objectives and priorities they pursue are consistent with and demand demographic change. Assessing the extent to which change in ownership reverses the processes whereby monopoly powers management of land and resources undermines these individual and collective conditions is therefore important to demonstrate. From the above and Appendix 2, it is clear that the aims and objectives of each of the Community Trusts are explicitly about comprehensive and integral sustainable development, characteristics that cannot be identified under previous ownership models, as discussed where the case study areas were introduced in Section 1.

This section continues by reviewing the evidence on the eight research questions outlined in Appendix 3. There are limited data available at the level of community, postcode district, local authority and Highlands & Islands Enterprise areas meaning that some of the key indicators of economic performance, population, wages and prices, etc. must be

approximated from (much) higher levels of aggregation. This restricts the analysis undertaken and so the insights to be gained purely from statistics and other quantitative evidence. This characteristic when researching and assessing directions and causes of change is a perennial challenge in rural areas, and the Highlands and Islands especially (Danson, 2015). Therefore, in the following, where direct numbers and other evidence are not available, the underlying factors and processes derived from the economic theory themselves become even more important in understanding and interpreting what appears to be happening.

Themes of monopoly powers

Economic development and activity

Research questions on the economy (A, B, F in Appendix 3) were set to examine the extent to which the basic economic processes and factors in the local economy were impacted by new community ownership.

Prices, wages, costs of living

Recognising the significance of higher costs and prices for many in rural locations, HIE has argued that there is: “urgent need both to strengthen their economic base and to limit these additional costs where possible. Unless people across the demographic spectrum – children, working age and pensioners – are able to live and thrive in these areas, it is feared that communities will decline and struggle to survive. This poses the double challenge of ensuring that costs are not too high and incomes are not too low for people in remote rural Scotland to have a minimum acceptable living standard” (HIE, 2016, p18). The paucity of data on such fundamental economic indicators necessitates considering the drivers and processes that determine these in particular locations, without being able to record prices, costs, wages, etc directly. Studies of costs and standards of living in island and remote mainland communities, (Hirsch et al., 2013; HIE, 2016; Davis et al., 2021) suggest that the budgets required by households to achieve a minimum acceptable standard of living in remote rural Scotland have been typically 10-40% higher than elsewhere in the UK. The cost disadvantages of living in more remote island locations, as many of the community buy-outs across rural Scotland are, show the additional costs could exceed 40% in some years. Higher prices were notable for food, clothes and household goods; considerably higher for household fuel bills, influenced by climate and fuel sources; and transport costs higher

because of the longer distances people have to routinely travel, particularly to work. Regarding the latter, these studies confirm the significance of transport costs for residents in many island and remote localities, regardless of who owns their land. Recent large increases in transport fuel costs (50% in under two years) and now household fuel costs will have exacerbated the real additional penalties endured by these communities. As will become apparent below, population size and density in a modern market economy are critical in creating the conditions for retailers to open and maintain small shops, co-ops, supermarkets and larger retail centres, hence the focus on demographics and geography.

Against these indications that living standards - in terms of real costs of goods and services locally, higher needs for heating and transport, and the minimum income requirements to achieve comparable levels of provision to the nation as a whole - are substantially lower in Knoydart, Galson and West Harris, there is some evidence that incomes may have been rising relatively since communities regained ownership of the land. It is not possible to attribute this to community ownership directly, but some analysis can be undertaken to understand this. As with prices, there is but limited data on such small areas, but across the whole Outer Hebrides Gross Weekly Earnings for full-time workers have grown by £106.30 in the last two years while the corresponding increase for Scotland was £32.80, therefore reducing the gap with the national average from £87.50 to £33 00. Hourly Pay has shown a similar closing from £2.19 to £0.83, rising in the Outer Hebrides from £12.41 in 2018 to £14.60 in 2020, whereas Scotland increased from £14.35 in 2018 to £15.18 in 2020. During Covid the average annual salary in the Western Isles for full-time male workers was 7% below the Scottish average, and 2% below for women; interestingly for part-timers men were earning 2% above the national average in the Outer Hebrides and incredibly 42% above for women. Although the pandemic had differential impacts on workforce participation and rewards, these relative improvements suggest that wider economic developments in the islands are at work. The interviews with representatives from Galson, West Harris and Knoydart, which faces almost all the same issues as the former two, confirmed wage pressures were becoming apparent locally with different interviewees suggesting:

For most jobs, wage increases are greater than the national average. Cleaners have been earning up to £35 per hour on turnover day for self-catering units.

We cannot identify people suitable for [senior and specialist professional positions] but admin staff posts attract a lot of interest. Local applicants have adapted to working from home, the greater flexibility that offers, and so trading off wages against less responsibility. Professionals tend to be staying in the well-paid Council and Health Board jobs, especially where they can work from home.

Access to housing is the biggest barrier to attracting and recruiting professional staff. There are problems with access to lower skilled staff, especially lower paid within the care sector which is in crisis because of labour shortages. Brexit meant we lost many Polish workers.

[similar views were expressed by several interviewees]

Our plans for more households and a bigger population will create the opportunity to have trades people setting up their own local businesses reducing costs for locals and retaining incomes.

Explanations for the price differentials vary by the commodity, but they cluster around three main drivers: market size, standards of housing and energy efficiency, locations of jobs and shops. Interestingly and most pertinent for communities under study here, the significance of the size of the local population and of access to employment locally are both revealed as critical in explaining the role of monopoly powers over use and management in depressing local economies. Therefore, as defined in their aims and objectives (Appendix 2) and delivered according to their respective annual reports and business plans (e.g. <https://www.westharristrust.org/info/wht-business-plan/>) efforts by Community Trusts to grow the local population, attract larger and more shopping outlets, advocate for discounts for locals, etc. will be facilitated through achieving their objectives on demographics and housing, employment and enterprise.

Population

Supporting the significance of such strategies to increase the population and so to expand the size of the local market, which were absent under former owners, are the results of occasional exercises comparing costs of living in different geographies. Official urban:rural classifications of settlements are often used to evaluate the effects of local market scale, distance from major distribution centres, range and diversity of suppliers and customers, and other key factors. These have tended to show that size of settlement is the most crucial element in explaining differences in prices for households and other purchasers alike.

Where employment and income opportunities are maintained or restrained at levels lower than their potential then economies of scale and scope cannot be realised; so a depopulated glen cannot support a larger shop with inevitable effects on prices and range of goods. Therefore, it is clear that monopoly ownership of land can adversely impact on local standards of living and sustainability where there is no interest in developing the local economy and community, that is in making it sustainable as has been the explicit strategic objectives of the four community trusts. As is apparent from the community buy-out case studies - which have been creating the conditions to attract new residents, build new housing, encourage more higher quality jobs and otherwise help to increase the size of their populations - so the incomes available to spend into the local economy have been increasing to the benefit of all. Complementing this with the encouragement of new enterprises, visitors and other sources of spending locally has likewise been increasing effective demand for shops located within their communities.

While small area statistics are difficult to obtain, by 2014 Bryan and Westbrook were reporting “a largely positive impact of community land ownership on population stability/growth and on demographics balance. These figures would appear to run counter to evidence that the population within the North and West of Scotland as a whole is showing some decline with a shift towards an increasingly older demographic”. Population trends in the majority of the non-buy-out comparable communities were downwards, especially amongst school age children (Bryan and Westbrook, 2014).

Populations across the developed world, and increasingly in developing countries, are ageing and falling; Scotland is no exception and these features are most apparent in the islands and old industrial areas. These trends will continue to have implications for public services, working populations, household size and ultimately the sustainability of local communities. The communities in the Hebrides and remote rural areas, including West Harris, Galson and Knoydart, currently face the same pressures and drivers as elsewhere with a tendency to have higher proportions of older people due to past large estate practices affecting housebuilding, employment opportunities and other requirements for generating a diverse economic base. The Galson Estate probably faces the most acute depopulation challenges with each set of townships/villages suffering continuing declines (<https://www.galsontrust.com/the-villages>): the Galson to Swainbost datazone, for

instance, has suffered an estimated fall of 11.7% between 2011 and 2019 (CnES, 2021) and has a pronounced high proportion of the elderly with 33% over the age of 65 compared with an average for the Outer Hebrides of 25% and only 10% under 16 compared with 16% in the region as a whole. Generally, and with long commutes to other employment and shopping opportunities, regaining a balance in the local population is essential for the case study communities in Harris and Knoydart, and in other vulnerable communities across rural Scotland. Even Abriachan, just 11 miles from Inverness, has seen the closure of several facilities which underpin a resilient and sustainable community, including the local primary school albeit a while ago. In his work on further demographic and settlement changes, Copus (2018a) projects that these will continue to be uneven with all remote areas, except the Northern Isles, losing more than 30 per cent of their working age population over the next quarter century. The consequences of those threats confirm the need to ensure that future economic prospects are much improved, with focus on sustainable inclusive growth as recognised by each of the case study community trusts. Further, his workings suggest that populations could be stabilised and made more sustainable, i.e. more balanced, with some fairly modest levels of net in-migration, and the interview with all the case study representatives confirmed the repopulation objectives embraced both incomers as well as return migrants and affordable housing for local people.

Consistent with the experiences of 26 of the 32 Scottish local authorities, there is a net loss of young people 16-29 from the case study areas and their wider regions as school-leavers go away to further and higher education in the major cities (CnES, 2021). While there are these outward movements to education and then staying away due to the lack of graduate and other well-paid jobs, there has been net in-migration to the Hebrides of young children and of all ages over 30. Typical of the case study estates, the Galson Estate interview verified how they are trying to attract the young and economically active to diversify the population, especially crucial given its aged profile. This discussion also revealed how such initiatives tend to be more successful during upturns in the economy, and then reverse during recessions with school-leavers tending to go away to tertiary education, perhaps not to return.

There are several drivers and attractions for returning or moving to the community-owned places and other remote settlements and these statistics confirm that job, enterprise and

retirement opportunities are key for most such relocations. The bases for these motivations vary between the buy-out communities on the islands such as Galson and West Harris on the one hand and, for example, Knoydart and Abriachan, with the former offering the potential for living in a fairly isolated and self-sufficient space and the latter being a commuting community where “the majority of inhabitants are employed in Inverness and beyond” (<http://www.abriachan.org.uk/who-we-are/>). Accommodating returning migrants and incomers presents the opportunity to address demographic challenges, especially where these are young families coming into the community. As recognised and embedded into their respective plans, the strategic aims of each of the case study estates could be met by developments to increase and diversify their populations to attain a more sustainable distribution of ages, households and families.

Housing

Since the start of the pandemic, demand for housing in many rural areas has increased as those escaping metropolitan congestion and those seeking second homes have been using their greater capital assets to bid up house prices in these places. Without new building, especially of affordable homes, there are imbalances between the supply and demand of housing in such localities presenting obstacles to attaining sustainability of (re)balanced demographics and economies. These problems are witnessed across many other regions including Cornwall, Wales and the Lake District as well rural areas further of Britain. In the Highlands and Islands, investors in AirBnB, empty crofts and buy-to-let properties for ‘staycations’ have been exacerbating local housing shortages. Before community ownership was achieved for the buy-out estates, there was usually effective sterilisation of housebuilding locally, and this has exacerbated the challenges in attracting and accommodating key workers such as teachers and health workers, in providing homes for locals who want to stay or return to the community, and in ensuring temporary workers have somewhere to rent. In their reports, plans and interviews, there is clear recognition by each of the case study communities of the need to address housing provision.

Knoydart **h**as long term aspirations to repeople the peninsula, expanding the population from 100 to 150 in the coming years, and eventually to have the capacity to accommodate 600 sustainably. Because temporary workers are looking for short stay rentals and many incomers to the community initially have limited capital, the Foundation is building a small

housing block with shared facilities. Planning for 27 bed spaces by 2028, this positive development will allow a cadence of temporary workers to be accommodated without extensive commuting, and support more permanent in-migrants with an entry point into the local housing market. An absentee landowner of an empty derelict building has been persuaded to sell at an agreed price, and the cottage is being converted into three homes and two new eco-houses constructed on that site creating five homes in total mostly for existing elderly residents. As well as the 32 bed spaces these developments will provide by 2028, other dilapidated buildings will be renovated to offer further accommodation. This programme of work will be targeted at attracting young families, with applicants subject to Rural Housing Burdens. As appropriate in land-based industries, the throughput of very skilled and qualified short-term workers and working students will also be housed on the farm again helping in addressing accommodation issues and offering a source of income for the enterprise and Foundation.

The Galson estate suggests that crofting rents and property prices for a house and e.g. half an acre have been fairly stable; but recently there have been signs that inflation in croft lands has escalated so that a croft typically would now cost £¼million compared with but a nominal price two decades ago. The impression is that whereas previously incomers were moving from urban areas for access to health services, this was superseded by those taking early retirement and working part-time from their new home, and recently, since Covid, the motivation seems to have a base to continue working-from-home. There have been other new bunkhouses, pods and houses introduced for experiential visitors and other tourists. The estate has noted that, as 'crofting has declined' – a reference to families moving away from farming being the core of the economic activity of the household, there has been diversification into more 'hobby crofting' (with fewer traditional and more 'exotic' livestock and a wider range of arable crops) alongside tourism and otherwise sectors compatible with working-from-home. Some have invested in new builds on the croft to accommodate visitors, as well as retaining their own homes. As in Norway, and in the Nordic countries generally, the concept of a multi-house home with a base in a rural idyll and an apartment in the 'city' has started to evolve locally.

Faced with similar housing shortages, the West Harris Trust is dedicating land for housing to help in the need for more sites. It was also noted in their interview that incomers to the

estate rather than returners are taking over vacant crofts, many then building holiday lets on the land to diversify into tourism. Anecdotally, assignment applications of crofts outwith the family tends to be to a similar set of new owners: capital rich, buying the tenancy and building new houses and accommodation for tourist stays. There is no evidence that such incomers are temporary and they do tend to make West Harris their new permanent home. These patterns are reported in other communities and confirm that the housing landscape is complex with some inward migration leading to investments to further expand bed spaces not at the expense of others seeking long term homes locally.

Abriachan is a fairly stable community with relatively few transient and temporary residents, partly due to its proximity to Inverness. However, there is some private rented accommodation for short term visitors who will tend to move on when their circumstances change. Most families in the area have stayed locally for long periods, encouraging a strong community spirit.

Developments of 'smart clachans' in several locations across the Highlands and Islands on community owned estates are both based on the traditional concepts of small groups of houses around common workings and being established to meet the same challenges of the case study areas: the need for affordable housing, to address Covid and climate change, and to repopulate the land, and to support Gaelic. Whether explicitly constructed in such small settlements with common domestic- and work-spaces or over more scattered sites close to community hubs, the aims and priorities are very similar: building resilience, regeneration of people, economy and environment and contributing to a just transition through a sustainable community. Some of the initiatives across the case study estates have strong echoes of the clachan concept, with Abriachan and Knoydart for example planning and building new affordable accommodation with rural housing burdens limiting potential future diminution of housing stock. Clustering new accommodation and facilities for tourism and locals and small business units in integrated developments is being pursued in the Tall ana Mara centre in West Harris, and housing developments in the business plan for the West Harris Trust promise that: *"the community itself will be significantly strengthened through the provision of more housing opportunities. This should enable the Trust to reach its target of 170 residents by the end of the business plan period. The community will be*

larger, younger, with a more balanced demographic and with greater economic and social opportunities than ever before” (<https://www.westharristrust.org/info/wht-business-plan/>).

Under former private and public ownership, it was argued in all the interviews, these reinforcing links between affordable housing and the promotion of local economic and social development would not have been possible or would have been further delayed. Therefore, the views expressed by all the case study communities was that populations would have continued to stagnate or decline, crofts to be abandoned, living costs continue to be adversely affected by long commutes, low wages and high prices, with a narrow economic base promising long-term decline. Despite suggestions that depopulation has continued in Galson, as discussed above, there are indications of this trend being reversed with *“many new houses being built on the estate”*, promising an upturn has started (<https://www.galsontrust.com/estate-business>).

Economic activity and development:

Under this theme, the research question considered the evidence on how the economy has changed in each locality (Appendix 3, question G complementing the economic issues in the preceding sub-section). In the periphery of a market economy, whether considered in geographical, industrial or logistical terms, providing the jobs, enterprises, housing and general support and confidence to attract and grow the local economy needs planning and a cohesive vision for sustainable development. Under monopoly ownership such interventions were focused on a narrow portfolio of sectors and products, such as income from crofting rents, sporting and forestry activities (discussed in Danson, 2020; Glass et al., 2019). In the case of West Harris: *“In 2010 when the community purchased the land from the Scottish government the annual guaranteed income from the estate was minimal, and mainly from croft rent”* (<https://www.westharristrust.org/employment/>), with a similar story from Knoydart: *“When the KF (Knoydart Foundation) first took over guardianship of the land housing was dilapidated, power outages were common place and facilities for businesses were non-existent”* (<https://knoydart.org/about-the-knoydart-foundation/>). Prior to its buy-out by the community, The Galson *“Estate at that time was under private ownership with minimal estate management or development”* (<https://www.galsontrust.com/buyout>). For Abriachan Forest Trust, on purchase they acquired a regular commercial single age-class monopoly-use pine and spruce forestry plantation with the former owners playing little

regard to any other amenities for the community
(<http://www.caledonia.org.uk/socialland/abriacha.htm>).

By contrast, the strategies and priorities of each of the four case study estates incorporates dynamic economic regeneration and enterprise formation as fundamental elements of sustainability. Remember that ownership by capitalists, and rich lairds and often state bodies and NDPBs was repeatedly justified in terms of optimising the use of the land in the most effective ways possible, or by undertaking the only sorts of activities possible in such degraded environments (discussed in Danson 2021; Glass et al., 2019). These were identified as backward and lagging places being managed in the only activities that could maintain any people in the area. However, post buy-out every case study was able to demonstrate new firm formation, increased incomes, re-established and improved local supply chains, and greater resilience and sustainability, as demonstrated below.

Enterprise birth rates are often used as a measure of business dynamism but this indicator has become problematic as self-employed workers are included in these statistics (Danson et al., 2021), falsely inflating the stock, status and flows of firms. Previous work on the rate of new firm formation across Scotland and in the Highlands and Islands has suggested low rates in rural areas, and especially in the Hebrides (discussed here: Danson, 2015). Partly a legacy of two centuries of landlordism stifling independence by local potential entrepreneurs, as projected by the theory of monopoly ownership and management, it might be expected that transfer of estates to the community might ownership would offer the opportunity for local people, return migrants and incomers to establish new enterprises (Burnett and Danson, 2017). Every case study area indeed has a priority and strategy for the growth of its economic base through new businesses being created:

As identified in their Strategic Plan, the Galson Estate Trust (2016) aims to increase the number of entrepreneurs and improve the range of local produce, generate more added value from the tourism sector locally and to 'facilitate the pooling of knowledge and resources, improving product consistency and achieving economies of scale'. Establishing and completing supply chains is seen as key to address the gaps in service provision, as visitors: 'struggle to find the range of supporting services and facilities they expect. The lack of supporting services such as accommodation, catering, public toilets and signage create a disappointing experience for some'. To encourage further developments of the sector, the

Trust is investigating the ‘longer term potential for local visitor branding, area promotion and high-quality product ranges’. The promised outcomes of these interventions would be increased income for tourism-related businesses, additional employment, and an extended visitor season. Locally, the Estate has seen new supply chains starting to emerge with businesses working together in crafts, heritage and retail outlets in shops and the museum. The Trust has assisted through encouraging embryonic partnerships in goods and services; these are beginning to flourish and include, for example, sustainable menus taking forward the linkages between crofters, farmers and hospitality providers; examples include: ‘Eat & Drink Local Blasad bìdh’, ‘Stay Local Fuirich còmhla rinn’, ‘Shop Local Tadhair air ar bùithtean’, and the ‘See Local. Be inspired Thig is Faic’ initiatives (<https://www.visitgalsonestate.com/eat-drink-local-1>).

Typically many estates under monopoly control have been dedicated to private ‘consumption of leisure’ with a lack of buildings made available for businesses so that local economies stagnated and communities were unable to build wealth (Glass et al., 2019). Although owned by the state, on transfer of ownership, West Harris displayed a number of similar characteristics of such places: ‘Before the community purchased the estate there was little space for small businesses, and creating these opportunities for local businesses to flourish has been a key focus for the trust’ (<https://www.westharristrust.org/employment/>). The West Harris Trust therefore embarked on a strategy of investments purchasing the Seilebost School, creating The Marine Shorebase ‘The Cliff’, and establishing the Community Enterprise Centre ‘Talla na Mara’, so that they are now a major property owner in West Harris. Seilebost School was initially used as office space before relocating to Talla na Mara and is currently let out to local businesses and operates as a small motorhome park with four electric hookups. The Cliff at Marine Shorebase was their first build, completed in 2014, and is currently leased by two local entrepreneurs. The largest development, Talla na Mara, supports up to 20 jobs through the four business units, offices and restaurant. With two more units on site, in total this development provides 30 new jobs and incomes that, critically, would not have existed prior to the buy-out. Significantly and confirming positive outcomes from the change in management of the estate, the employment and enterprises existing before transfer to community control continue, but overall the basis of the economy has changed with an export base around online sales and in person sales to

tourists. As reported above, diversification from crofting into tourism and related activities has led this restructuring.

Knoydart, in many ways the most isolated community in the UK, has an ambitious economic strategy and plans to build the number of enterprises alongside other initiatives. The integrating philosophy underpinning these resonates strongly with the community wealth building and wellbeing concepts of the circular economy, community self-sufficiency and very tellingly, given its popular identification exclusively with city locations, the 20-minute neighbourhood. Jobs will be created to deliver this vision, with peatland restoration, reforestation, more crofts, shop and post office, garage, new tourism businesses, an expanded ranger service and of course Scotland's and Britain's most remote pub The Old Forge all contributing. Details of progress already made on this agenda was presented above, with such success under all these items, perhaps most newsworthy concerns the local pub: *"The Old Forge Community Benefit Society is a group of Knoydart residents with one common goal: to bring our local pub under community ownership for the benefit of all patrons and pub-lovers. ... [On 28th March 2022, their vision was realised] for the Forge to be a vibrant and environmentally conscious community-owned pub, welcoming to all and investing in the regeneration and stability of Knoydart"* (<https://www.theoldforgecbs.org/>).

Although not one of their main objectives, the Abriachan Forest Trust has aimed to create jobs locally. As with all the case study trusts, there has been a requirement to generate income to fund their own activities as management and to undertake its executive duties. Much of the work of this trust has been 'subsidised by the commercial returns from felling, which now include payment for quality sawlogs as well as roundwood going to Norbord, plus a wide range of other funding sources, including service contracts with the local authority' (AFT, 2020).

Human capital, enterprise, markets and skills

Both research questions *E: Have there been losses of skills and expertise since the buy-out?* and *F: What have been the changes in numbers of enterprises, value added, markets; have there been losses of skills?* to an extent have been addressed above, but further evidence was offered during the interviews and in reports on these elements. Brief mentions of skills gained and applied were offered in all the case studies. For the more isolated communities secondary and tertiary education have traditionally meant leaving the local area and

eventually the island or glen. Offering quality, graduate and professional openings to return to has been an increasing problem for many parts of the region, and the buy-out areas especially given their truncated career ladders under the former estate owners.

Examples of reversing this out-migration after ownership transferred include expansion of tourism in Galson which has given the opportunities for many to replace one or more of their (multi)jobs. Focusing on arts and crafts, heritage and environmental experiential visitors has been creating spaces for qualified returners and incomers to find work and establish their own small businesses. Diversification on crafts and new firms are widening the skills and talents required and becoming embedded into the local infrastructure. Digital availability has improved so that online expertise and experience is both needed and applied, again forming new possibilities for attracting and retaining people. As explained in the interviews with community trust representatives, none of these developments could have been undertaken at pace or at all without community ownership providing the space, the coordination of relevant public sector and private partners, and the support and guidance of the estate.

West Harris reports that staff turnover is generally low in the Hebrides and especially so in the local area, compared with Stornoway for instance. The new institutions of community buy-outs themselves have offered decent work, good wages and secure employment 'for the development of the individual'. Expanding on this, the West Harris Trust argued that its workers tend to stay to benefit from staff development programmes whereas mobility between positions within larger towns and more central regions would be more normal. The Harris Distillery employs 30 people with different professional and technical qualifications along with less skilled work and provides an excellent example of how an investment can have a very significant impact on building resilience into the local economy and community. There are implications of such a development, however, as this work is preferred by some of the seasonal staff in tourism sectors which is already suffering from labour shortages in the post Brexit labour market with the loss of the Polish and student workforce. Whether this development itself could have proceeded without the transfer of ownership is a moot point with both location and local support presented as key in its foundation. With many new distilleries being established in Scotland in recent years and a so a competitive need to capture market and investor attention with a 'unique selling point', it is notable that the

'The Isle of Harris Distillery: with the future of Harris at its heart' has promoted an image which reflects on and is consistent with the social, community and heritage wealth building aims of the Trust (<https://harrisdistillery.com/pages/the-social-distillery>). It seems reasonable to argue that 'the Social Distillery' is ideally suited to the location on the estate: addressing depopulation by allowing young people to be 'able to return to find work, set down roots and build a life in the place they called home', 'mitigating their environmental impact' and being a 'catalyst for positive change' (<https://harrisdistillery.com/pages/about-the-distillery>).

Both the Abriachan Forest Trust and the Knoydart Foundation have recorded new skills being acquired in a range of forestry and other occupations, including chain saw certificates, basic courses in assessing forestry, etc. Each of these also is implementing plans for education and training at different levels, in the former case this includes 'forest classrooms and an award-winning programme of education, skills training and health (mental and physical) activities. It has constructed new access (some 40 km of paths and tracks) and a range of forest buildings and structures (forest classroom, workshop, roundhouse, bird hide and many more)'. In Knoydart, the farm will accommodate visiting student parties while the 16 active community organisations (registered with SCIO and mostly CICs) have training and education facilities and opportunities as integral elements of their establishment and operations.

Of course, all the running and administration of the estates requires skills and expertise to be applied that had no outlet nor opportunity under the former regimes of private and externally run national owners. By their very being, the buy-outs have created the need for investments in and dissemination of office, board and a range of further skills that previously were restricted to the estates; to a significant extent locally the use and management of these skills were under monopsony control with no other outlets available.

Diversity

A number of the above sections have demonstrated how these case study estates have actively pursued sustainability through diversity. Adding further flavour was expedited through the research question (C in Appendix 3) which sought to drill down further into these trends by looking at the natural heritage and land-based activities in particular. From the earliest buy-outs onwards, the commitment to stewardship of the land has always been

a distinctive element of the community land movement. All the reports, community action plans and interviews emphasised these sentiments and strategies and initiatives to fulfil sustainable development goals. Contrasting with the deer forest and grouse moor deserts, the Sitka spruce monocultures and the emptied glens under monopoly ownership, economic, social and environmental resilience and sustainability are at the very core of these communities. Renewable energy schemes to generate electricity for local needs have been established in all four of the estates, rather than the massive wind farms owned by multinational companies paying rents to the lairds. While the former may contribute less to GDP purely in terms of scale of installed capacity, the benefits to local GNP are much more in line with the just transition, community wealth building agendas. In a recent report on these differences, it was revealed that ‘wholly community owned wind farms provide benefit payments that are, on average, 34 times more than the new private industry standard. In cash terms, the average payment from the community owned wind farms in our study is £170,000 per installed MW per annum compared to the private industry standard of £5,000 per installed MW per annum. This is a very significant difference and highlights the long-term financial benefit that these projects bring to the local communities and communities in which they are sited’ (Aquatera, 2021). Consistent with its overall approach and without a connection to the national grid, the Knoydart Foundation provides clean, green power through its own hydroelectric scheme through its wholly owned trading subsidiaries, Knoydart Renewables. As well as providing revenue to the Estate’s finances, Galson’s own wind turbines offer greater security of supply locally and income from supplies into the grid. West Harris has both community-owned wind and hydro power schemes on its land and, like other island locations, has potential significant opportunities anticipated from the exploitation of the recent Scotwind offshore wind leasing round; as Stuart Black, CEO of HIE forecast:

“We can expect many new, highly skilled offshore wind related jobs to be created in some of our more rural and island communities. We believe the economic impacts of the offshore wind industry will be along similar lines to what we saw 40 or so years ago with oil and gas developments and will help create the conditions for a just transition for both the Highlands and Islands, and the climate ... [These developments] will accelerate the development of our

industries of the future such as green hydrogen production from offshore wind, creating further new, green, fair work in our island and coastal communities ⁱⁱ.

Regarding environmental diversity more broadly, West Harris and Galson are traditional crofting communities with marine concerns on islands whereas Knoydart and Abriachan are smaller communities on the mainland with interests in forestry and other activities. In all cases, however, restoring biodiversity and redressing the failures and damages of monopoly powers are costs they are committed to bearing. Having to meet the costs and raise the finance to undertake renovations to the degraded environment and reverse the unnatural developments of the last two centuries, represents a burden on the community buy-out estates that were not imposed or necessarily undertaken under their previous ownerships. [Thus](#), creating unsustainable places and spaces based on monopoly powers over the use and the management of these carried no penalties for previous owners, a clear inequality and inequity given respective resources and capacities.

Therefore, given the need to generate income to support investments in the environment, the strategies of the respective estates are critical in attaining resilience and sustainability. For the traditional crofting and farming community in Galson, the key strategy for the Trust would deliver 'additional incomes through increased value of livestock and produce, healthier lives through increased local produce, carbon reduction through lower food miles, and the attraction of younger families to improve population balance' (Galson Estate Trust, 2016). Supporting this, although moving into 'hobby farming' or 'hobby crofting' within overall decline, crofters have been diversifying into specialist and other breeds, including horses, alpacas and llamas, selling more to the mainland. Building 'a land management plan has presented challenges'; the decline of traditional crofting means moorland areas are being used less so that deer numbers have increased with negative impacts on cultivated areas, gardens and on the roads. Less human activity has also encouraged geese numbers to rise markedly with similar conflicts, an issue affecting many communities across the Highlands and Islands. Feedback from interviews also highlighted how greater numbers of apparently 'uneducated and ill-informed' tourists likewise disturb vulnerable and fragile habitats, which is especially concerning on the machair. Geese and deer management schemes have been implemented, in cooperation with state agencies and neighbouring

estates, but these can be expensive while access rights are a challenge for the Planning System.

Likewise, crofters in West Harris are engaged in environmental schemes, which the Trust supports but does not lead. There are concerns over the maintenance of such activities given the loss of CAP payments post-Brexit and the rising average age of active crofters. These issues aside, and as with all the case study estates, West Harris Trust and its community demonstrate recognition and pride in the natural environment in all its forms, act as genuine stewards of the land, flora and fauna and proactively pursue their objective: 'To advance environmental protection including preservation and conservation of the natural environment'. To this end, dedicated information is disseminated through various media on such activities as responsible tourism (<https://www.westharristrust.org/the-trust/exploring-the-estate/responsible-tourism/>), camping, metal detectors, drones, mental wellbeing and community engagement.

For the Abriachan Forest Trust, there is a fairly demanding agenda to promote a return to a diverse local ecology. The importance of professional advice and guidance has been confirmed in their appointment from the outset of a retained forestry advisor. With 540 hectares of mostly conifer forest, yielding an annual increment (increase in volume) of 2,200m³ of softwood, has developed and 'implemented a programme of forest management and restructuring (including clear felling and thinning), and forest enterprise development (firewood and biomass). This has transformed a regular commercial single age-class monopoly-use forestry plantation into a multi-purpose forest consisting of four age classes, with over 200,000 trees planted in new native woodland creation. These new plantings have been designated for priority areas for trees, places of bog and peat have been excluded from these to allow those habitats protection and restoration for their own flora and fauna. Spreading income generation over time to decrease risk, and retain resilience for the land and the Trust, Sitka Spruce is being managed and harvested as a commercial crop following the expert advice for age classes built into the forestry plan.

This route to sustainability in the natural and community environment through synergies, integrated planning and implementation has been adopted comprehensively by the Knoydart Foundation also. At the heart of the mission of the Foundation is sustainable community development through addressing climate change and promoting biodiversity,

and this approach was embedded into their strategies even before the Covid pandemic had appeared. Local support for these as priorities is 'very strong' with 'Seventy of the local population of 103 engaged with this agenda'. By rejecting ribbon development along the bay and instead developing the 111-acre farm and associated actions is moving Knoydart towards self-sufficiency and resilience. One-third of the peninsula is to be fenced, deer moved and the whole landscape turned over to peat restoration, biodiversity and a massive increase in reforestation increasing from the 500,000 trees already planted to over 5 million more over the next few years. Options being considered to complement these investments are more crofts, smallholdings, houses to attract, accommodate and employ the people needed for this work and to regenerate the community and landscape.

Governance and management: Leadership and engagement

What has been apparent in the evidence generated from reports and interviews, and a key part of the reviews of community buy-outs, has been the role of the trusts, their governance arrangements and processes in delivering their aims and objectives. Practices and policies embedded into the aims and objectives of all four case studies confirm that activities and interventions by Trusts locally can be delivered in different forms through direct delivery, and through enabling and partnership working models and frameworks, and again this contrasts with the governance and management arrangements of larger estates before buy-outs (described by e.g. Glass et al., 2019). Two research questions were posed (D and H in Appendix 3) to assess how these are operating in the case study areas, and so their contributions to achieving sustainability and resilience.

To 'win the land' each community pursuing a buy-out under land reform legislation must establish suitable organisations that can be shown to command the support of the community. When purchasing their respective estates, two of the four community trusts being studied here did not use the Land Reform Acts in securing a change in ownership. However, in terms of best practice governance recommended in that legislation, all are able to claim with justification that they are run by a board elected by members of their community, board turnover is reasonable. Where there are imbalances in terms of age, gender or diversity then steps are being taken to remedy this. Even where there appear to be challenges in gaining formal representation all members of the community, then they all appear to have a better range of interests and views than many other community bodies

across the country (<https://scvo.scot/policy/research/evidence-library/2018-charities-inclusive-boards-2018>; <https://scvo.scot/policy/research/evidence-library/2014-on-board-how-can-participation-on-third-sector-boards-in-scotland-be-increased-widened-and-strengthened>). There are the essentials of an appropriate ‘Sociocracy’ in each; in other words and in stark contrast to the private estates and state bodies who previously owned, used and managed these places, the Trusts have ‘dynamic governance’ with a system of governance of ‘psychologically safe environments and productive organisations’. Unlike those with monopoly powers formerly, the Trusts are ‘distinguished by the use of consent ... in discussion and decision-making by people who have a shared objective or work process’.

Some of the tourism and other developments in Galson, the interview revealed, would not have happened without the Estate promoting the area through working in partnership with other agencies, so that direct delivery by the Board and staff is complemented by enabling and facilitating activities, processes and structures. Measures taken to address issues raised and visited upon these communities by Covid restrictions were well-received in their respective populations; for example, West Harris Trust recorded how positive was the feedback and appreciation during the lockdowns and afterwards. Initiatives such as the ‘Growing West Harris’ and in Abriachan the delivery of Branching Out (a mental health support initiative, which has been extended across NHS Highland community mental health team areas thanks to leader training and ongoing support from AFT and Scottish Forestry, AFT, 2021) demonstrate the growing importance of these trusts in building individual, community and regional resilience. There is no evidence of such interventions under the former owners. These initiatives and many more catalogued across the respective websites of the case study communities provide testament to how the community ownership model has been so important to the response of these and other places both to the Covid-19 pandemic (see <https://www.communitylandscotland.org.uk/whats-new/owning-our-future/>) and to their evolving work addressing climate change and its consequences (Macaulay and Dalglish, 2021).

Social capital is ‘about how people interact with each other, how they work together, share, help, and collaborate’. The internal characteristics of the four buy-out community case studies are examples of bonding social capital, contributing to resilience at each of these levels of society. Again, from the reports on when the transfers of ownership were planned

and initiated and the interviews, these were much smaller if present at all in communities before transfer, though the monopoly powers controlling the community were perhaps instrumental in encouraging locals to come together to start the process of building a cohesive and inclusive place. In contrast to excluding local communities from decisions over use and management of their homelands, community owners have been actively undertaking strategies and projects of inclusion, and so of closing gaps between ‘social groups, social class, race, religion or other important sociodemographic or socioeconomic characteristics’, i.e. building bridging social capital. The active engagement and participation by the elderly in the ‘Growing West Harris’ offers an example of inclusion and bridging and: *This definitely positive and would not have happened under the previous owners.* Whereas large estates, private, public or NDPBs, at best would interact with other organisations without involving local people, all the community trusts had become engaged in partnership working with a wide range of other institutions locally, regionally and nationally. Forming linking social capital in this way is recognition that the trusts are accepted as legitimate and approved partners in economic, social and environmental developments, further solidifying their role and status as anchor organisations. These various dimensions of social capital undoubtedly have further encouraged the formation of supply chains, diversification and creation of businesses and other community organisations.

In aggregate and mutually reinforcing, the missions, aims and objectives of the community trusts are demonstrably being delivered through integrated and inclusive governance arrangements serving to build sustainability and resilience. As was argued by all the representatives interviewed, these activities, projects and philosophies are not only very different from the attitudes of former owners – who applied their monopoly powers over the use and management of the estates, but also:

Many of the new and existing services could not have been delivered locally without the Community Trust, that is they could not have been under the previous owners. (Murdo Mackay, Chair West Harris Trust)

5. Conclusions

The framework derived from the literature on the theory of monopoly as applied to land and land resources (Danson, 2020) generated a series of research questions to inform the aims of this research to work with four separate community landowners to:

- assess the significance of collective ownership of the land asset in contributing to the sustainable development of each community
- evaluate sustainability impacts within each community across a range of indicators on the basis of available relevant data

Although there are no systematic data collected on many of the economic and social indicators covering such small areas as these estates, access to literature, official statistics which could be pro-rated down to the community, reports and other sources have provided the bases for addressing these research aims. The research questions and themes were considered under a number of headings around discussions on (a) growth and development of the local economy, (b) diversity, (c) costs and prices, (d) skills and people, (e) governance and management. As explored and analysed above, within the wider set of sources identified, the interviews with representatives from the community trusts offered categorical evidence that the transfer of powers to the community had produced positive outcomes. These were revealed in absolute terms, in comparison with other regional trends, and especially with what did happen and would likely to have transpired now under the former owners. Such counterfactual analysis suggests that the changes reported here, and the improvements revealed by this study, are indicative rather than uncontentious; however, the messages in terms of sustainable development, community resilience, social and economic progress appear very clear.

In terms of jobs, enterprises, incomes and other economic performance indicators all four of the community buy-outs have recorded positive and sustainable developments. The feedback from all locations was that these elements of progress either would have been delayed under former ownership or not have happened at all, and this is consistent with other studies of community buy-outs (e.g. Glass, McMorran and Thomson, 2019). While these communities continue to face higher costs than the mainland, with lower average incomes, in complex processes involving both indirect and direct interventions by the trusts – e.g. facilitating collaboration between businesses in the supply chain or establishing enterprise hubs to accommodate new firms, the relative gap between their real incomes and the national average has been reducing. The greater resilience apparent in the communities under Covid, Brexit and climate change challenges compares well against expectations, and what would have been expected under monopoly ownership (Macaulay

and Dalglish, 2021). By investing in people, attracting higher quality employment, entrepreneurs and ideas, through measures to regenerate and revive the natural environment, these communities are demonstrably building sustainable and resilient places and spaces.

Underpinning such changes and elemental to setting the priorities, strategies, aims and objectives of each of the communities are appropriate governance vehicles. Although some trusts across the country quite naturally have to confront volunteer burn-out and are vulnerable to key expertise and skills leaving the area, the four case studies have means to identify and address such challenges. While all have ongoing issues to address in a dynamic environment of changing threats and opportunities, the evidence and analysis presented here across each and every one of the thirteen expected 'local community impacts' (Appendix 3) of monopoly powers confirm that transfer to community ownership has led to improvement.

Reflecting the community wealth building agenda (NAC, 2020) and the findings of the Just Transition Commission (JTC, 2021), these buy-out communities are exemplars for applying the principles of sustainable development fit to move Scotland to net zero emissions by 2045 whilst retaining value added locally and promoting a wellbeing economy. Without doubt, none of these places would be contributing so strongly or appropriately towards meeting the UN's SDGs nor to the need to move towards circular economies without the transfer of land ownership (complementing the study findings of Macaulay and Dalglish, 2021, and Glass et al., 2019). All are (re)building strong local supply chains, including all members of the community, regenerating people and place. By focusing on building the wealth of the local community, they are moving to deliver on the four key messages of the JTC:

1. Pursuing an orderly, managed transition to net-zero that creates benefits and opportunities for people across Scotland
2. Equipping people with the skills and education they need to benefit from our transition to net-zero
3. Empowering and invigorating our communities and strengthening local economies
4. Sharing the benefits of climate action widely; ensuring costs are distributed on the basis of ability to pay.

As argued by both NAC (2020) and JTC (2021), matching of these actions and achievements would not have been possible without community ownership and, as suggested in Glass, McMorran and Thomson (2019) and in Macaulay and Dalglish (2021), these would have been counter to the motivations of those who had previously owned, used and managed these estates. This is consistent with the theory of monopoly powers (Danson, 2021) and is a compelling endorsement for community land ownership and for its extension more broadly and more quickly. Communities, the economy and the environment cannot afford to wait for market failures to be addressed by the owners of large estates, whether private, state or NGOs.

Bibliography

AFT (2020) *Case Study: Small Forestry Business*, Abriachan Forest Trust, mimeo.

Aquatera (2021) *A Comparison of the Financial Benefits Arising from Private and Community Owned Wind Farms*. Final Report to Point and Sandwick Development Trust.

Bryan, A. and Westbrook, S. (2014) *Community Land Scotland - Summary of Economic Indicator Data*,

<http://www.communitylandscotland.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2014/06/FINAL-Community-Land-Scotland-Economic-Data-Report-140414-For-Release.pdf>.

Burnett, K.A. and Danson, M. (2017) 'Enterprise and entrepreneurship on islands and remote rural environments, *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, 18(1), 25-35, doi:10.1177/1465750316686237.

CnES (2021) *Communities Department Socio Economic Update No. 43*, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

Danson, M. (2015) 'Empowered community-led inclusion – community resilience', report to Strengthening Communities Directorate, HIE.

Danson, M., Galloway, L. and Sherif, M. (2021) 'From unemployment to self-employment: Can enterprise policy intensify the risks of poverty?', *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 75, 102164, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpa.2020.102164>.

Danson, M. (2020) *Scoping the Classic Effects of Monopolies within Concentrated Patterns of Rural Land Ownership*, A Discussion Paper, Community Land Scotland, <https://www.communitylandscotland.org.uk/resources/scoping-the-classic-effects-of-monopolies-within-concentrated-patterns-of-rural-land-ownership/>

Davis, A., Bryan, A., Hirsch, D., Ellen, J., Shepherd, C. and Padley, M. (2021) *The Cost of Remoteness. Reflecting Higher Living Costs in Remote Rural Scotland When Measuring Fuel Poverty*, Equality and Welfare: Social Research, Scottish Government.

Galson Estate Trust (2016) *Strategic Plan, Plana Ro-innleachdail, 2017-2037*, Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn, https://www.galsontrust.com/files/ugd/682f71_f94c61f241044838b29a99fcd4c44aa2.pdf.

Glass, J., McMorran, R. and Thomson, S. (2019) *The Effects Associated with Concentrated*

and Large-Scale Land Ownership in Scotland: A Research Review, Report prepared for Scottish Land Commission, Rural Policy Centre, SRUC.

HIE (2016) *A Minimum Income Standard for Remote Rural Scotland: A Policy Update*, Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

Hirsch, D., Bryan, A., Davis, A., Smith, N., Ellen, J. and Padley, M. (2013) *A Minimum Income Standard for Remote Rural Scotland*, Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

James Hutton Institute (2021) 'National Islands Plan survey paints mixed picture of life in Scottish islands', <https://www.hutton.ac.uk/news/national-islands-plan-survey-paints-mixed-picture-life-scottish-islands>.

JTC (2021) *Just Transition Commission: A National Mission for a Fairer, Greener Scotland*, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/transition-commission-national-mission-fairer-greener-scotland/pages/1/>.

Kennedy, M. (2022) 'Supply chain looking to 'get out of jail free' on carbon', NFU Scotland, <https://www.nfus.org.uk/news/blog/supply-chain-looking-to-get-out-of-jail-free-on-carbon>.

Land Commission for Scotland (2021) *Legislative Proposals to Address the Impact of Scotland's Concentration of Land Ownership*, Discussion Paper, Scottish Land Commission

Macaulay, B. and Dalgligh, C. (2021) *Community Landowners and the Climate Emergency*, Report, Community Land Scotland, https://www.communitylandscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Community-Landowners-the-Climate-Emergency_Report.pdf.

Macfarlane, L. (2021) 'Scotland is on the global frontlines of The Great Net-Zero Land Grab', opendemocracy, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/scotland-is-on-the-global-frontlines-of-the-great-net-zero-land-grab>.

NAC (North Ayrshire Council) (2020) *Community Wealth Building Strategy, 2020-2025*, <https://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/council/community-wealth-building/community-wealth-building.aspx>.

Scottish Government (2021) *National Performance Framework*, <https://www.nationalperformance.gov.scot>.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those who agreed to be interviewed, gave freely of their time and shared their thoughts and experiences of working and volunteering for community buy-out trusts. Without them and their colleagues, the positive outcomes recorded here would not have been delivered. The feedback and comments from Community Land Scotland staff and board has been very welcome, especially from Ailsa Raeburn, Chair, and Dr Josh Doble, Policy Manager. Particular appreciation is for Dr Calum MacLeod who, when Policy Director, not only commissioned and encouraged the research but also offered detailed, informed suggestions and advice throughout; his critiques of land reform history and policy are invaluable and influential.

Thanks also to the Esmée Fairburn Foundation for providing the funding for this research.

Appendix 1: Case study communities:

Criteria	West Harris	Abriachan	Galson	Knoydart
Large	19,100 acres	1,334 acres	56,000 acres	55,000
Well-established in community ownership	12 years	24 years	15 years	23 years
Previous ownership	Scottish Government	Forestry Commission Scotland	Private estate	Private estate
Location	Outer Hebrides: island	Remote: mainland	Outer Hebrides: island	Remote: mainland
Governance	Elected Board	Elected Board	Elected Board	Elected Board along with representatives of Highland Council, the Chris Brasher Trust and John Muir Trust.
Urban-rural category*	Remote rural area	Accessible rural area	Remote rural area	Remote rural area

*Scottish Government's sixfold urban-rural classification

Accessible Rural Areas: with a population of less than 3,000 people, and within a 30-minute drive time of a Settlement of 10,000 or more.

Remote Rural Areas: with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more.

Appendix 2: Case study Community Trusts - Aims and objectives

Community Trust	Aims and objectives
West Harris	<p>Revitalise the community by attracting new residents and creating housing and employment opportunities.</p> <p>To manage community land and associated assets for the benefits of the crofting community of West Harris and the public in general following principles of sustainable development.</p> <p>To advance environmental protection including preservation and conservation of the natural environment.</p> <p>Enhance the education of the crofting community of West Harris (and beyond) about our culture, heritage and history.</p>
Abriachan	<p>Improve and sustain the biodiversity of the surrounding area through sensitive land and forest management.</p> <p>Create and support local employment.</p> <p>Encourage access for all, with ensuing health and well-being benefits.</p> <p>Provide and support outdoor learning opportunities for all.</p> <p>Increase community capacity.</p>
Galson	<p>The relief of poverty in such ways as may be thought fit.</p> <p>The advancement of education, training or retraining, particularly amongst unemployed people, in providing them with work experience and the advancement of education in the benefits of sustainable development.</p> <p>The provision of housing for those who are in a condition of need and the improvement of housing in the public sector and charitable ownership.</p> <p>To develop, or alternatively develop through other agencies, infrastructure and communication links within the Galson community for the benefit of the general public.</p>

	The protection and conservation of the environment.
Knoydart	<p>To conserve and preserve the character and natural beauty of the Knoydart Peninsula for the benefit of the public to enjoy and study in keeping with the views of the local population.</p> <p>To foster and encourage appreciation and interest in the peninsula and to allow access and opportunities for recreation all year round without detriment to the conservation, protection and careful management which the area requires and deserves.</p> <p>To encourage and develop a spirit of voluntary commitment by individuals, corporate bodies and any other groups of people willing to assist in achieving the Foundation's objectives.</p> <p>To relieve the poverty of the unemployed inhabitants of the Knoydart Peninsula by providing or assisting in finance and opportunities for employment and appropriate training or retraining.</p> <p>To promote the benefit of the inhabitants of the peninsula without distinction of political, religious or other opinions in a common effort with the inhabitants and other organisations with a view to improving living conditions.</p>

Appendix 3: Framework and interview questions

Feature		Local Community Impacts	Wider Socio-Economic Impacts	Research questions	Addresses Features
Negative					
Higher prices	1	<p>Charged to local members of the community through domination of goods and services markets.</p> <p><i>Linked ownership in housing, groceries, fuels, hospitality facilities.</i></p>	<p>Raises cost of living so population restricted and alternative suppliers constrained by limited market.</p>	<p>A: Since buy-out, how have prices, costs, wages, etc changed for crofters, residents, workers, suppliers compared with similar communities?</p>	A: 1 4 6
Allocative inefficiency	2	<p>Insufficient resources devoted to expanding economic activity and demand artificially limited so that potential for expanding local economy restricted.</p>	<p>Growth and development of local community and economy restricted below socially efficient levels.</p> <p>Consequent (re)location of people and economic</p>	<p>B: How have levels of economic activity and value added changed since buy-out in terms of number of enterprises, supply chains, barriers to entry, etc?</p>	B: 2 3 4 5 11

		<p>Opportunity costs of owners' behaviour high.</p> <p><i>Food, timber processing off-site; supply chains broken for local suppliers/outlets.</i></p>	<p>activities elsewhere in the country creating overcrowding and congestion, as well as rural depopulation with associated negative impacts.</p>		
Productive inefficiency	3	<p>Goods and services are not produced at lowest costs, so raising costs and prices for local and national economy.</p> <p><i>Deer managed for sport rather than food production.</i></p>	<p>Higher costs of production adversely affect the economy as a whole. Costs and prices higher than should be, wasting resources and damaging enterprise.</p>	See B	
X-inefficiency	4	<p>Costs higher than need be because less attention to controlling costs, and to pursuing best value for money. This raises costs of supplies for locals.</p>	<p>Local costs raised for all consumers as major customers accepts higher prices. This crowds competition and other users</p>	See A B	

		<i>Fishing and hunting activities for leisure rather than for business.</i>	of the inputs out of production.		
Supernormal profits	5	Without competition from others for consumers, excess profits possible and new entrants can face barriers to entry. <i>Small local demands and cross-subsidisation within the estate limits market size.</i>	Overall costs to society through landowners acquiring more income and wealth than justified by activities and ownership.	See B	
Higher prices charged to suppliers	6	Dominant landowner can use monopsony power to pay lower prices and wages to local suppliers and workers. Distortion of labour and other markets through supply chains.	Overall demand in local economy is suppressed as incomes lower than would be in a competitive market context.	See A	

		<i>No alternative local employer, especially where remote.</i>			
Diseconomies of scale	7	Very large estates, which may have mono-cultures or an overly diversified portfolio, can become inefficient through poor management of too much, or conversely too little. <i>Wealth allows toleration of inefficiency and mismanagement.</i>	Local economy can become exposed to overdependence on either a narrow sector or one dominant business. If either comes under threat, prices, costs and uncertainty all increase.	C: How has diversity in economy and environment changed; have there been changes in use and application of human capital and in migration; have there been multiplier and supply chain effects?	C: 7 9 10 11
Lack of incentives	8	Wealthy private and NGO landowners, cushioned from market forces and removed from the need to consider opportunity costs, face few incentives to innovate,	Path dependency embedded into economy and community lags behind with opportunities and potential forsaken.	D: How have governance changes, democratic control, etc impacted on plans and actions in community; have there been changes in social capital (bonding, bridging and linking)?	D: 8 9

		<p>diversify, develop. Local community and economy underperform and stagnate.</p> <p><i>No external or market pressure for sustainable local activities, services, affordable housing.</i></p>			
Lack of choice	9	<p>Community members and enterprises restricted in their ability to choose alternative inputs and markets.</p> <p><i>Dominant owners restrict choices and development.</i></p>	<p>Future and potential growth and development constrained, long run continuing stagnation.</p>	See C	
Positive					
Economies of scale	10	<p>Large operations and wealth of private, state and NGOs allow specialist management and other investments to</p>	<p>Greater security and stability for workers and suppliers.</p>	<p>E: Have there been losses of skills and expertise since the buy-out?</p> <p>Supplemented by C</p>	<p>E: linked to 7</p>

		<p>lower costs and seek efficiencies.</p> <p><i>Opportunity for employment of specialist skills and functions.</i></p>	Possibility of lower costs and diversification.		
Research & development	11	<p>If estates have a comparative advantage in some sub-sector, they may be able to invest in R&D to stay competitive.</p> <p><i>Expertise developed in renewables, fish farming.</i></p>	Raises the potential for opportunities of higher quality jobs, reputational benefits for the local economy.	<p>F: What have been the changes in numbers of enterprises, value added, markets; have there been losses of skills?</p> <p>Supplemented by B & C</p>	
Gaining monopoly power through efficiency	12	<p>An efficient landowner may have gained and be able to maintain efficient output and profitability and continue to outperform the next best alternatives.</p>	Opportunities may be missed as SMEs unable to compete individually or collectively as cannot achieve economies and	<p>G: Any changes in new firm formation, markets, etc?</p> <p>Supplemented by B & C</p>	

		<i>Innovative and unique developments in environmental and sustainable tourism.</i>	efficiencies for major infrastructure.		
Global competition	13	<p>Monopoly powers will be limited by competition from outwith the locality, for direct service and goods provision and for alternative venues, etc.</p> <p><i>Neighbouring estates and businesses extend their market reach.</i></p>	Some estates only affordable by wealthy as playgrounds.	<p>H: Have community leaders assumed new monopoly powers and has there been a loss of influence over neighbours?</p> <p>Supplemented by B, C & D</p>	

ⁱ https://consult.gov.scot/land-reform-and-tenancy-unit/land-reform-scotland/supporting_documents/00464887.pdf

ⁱⁱ <https://www.hie.co.uk/latest-news/2022/january/17/offshore-wind-impact-could-be-similar-to-oil-and-gas-sector-says-hie/?returnUrl=%2Flatest-news%2F%3FcurrentPageId%3D1542%26page%3D1%26showAllResults%3Dfalse>