

## Project to celebrate 100 years of community landownership receives major funding award

Press release: 31/10/2023

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Community Land Scotland has received a major award from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to share the history of community ownership in Scotland – and to look ahead to what can be achieved in the next 100 years. Funding of £215,510 has been awarded to Community Land Scotland, to enable them to deliver the *100 Years of Community Ownership* project, which has also received support from the Scottish Government.

Community landownership has been one of Scotland's success stories over the past thirty years but the movement actually dates back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. 100 years ago this November, the Stornoway Trust in the Outer Hebrides (Lewis) became the first place in Scotland to complete the transfer of land into community hands.

Since then, over 500 communities in Scotland have taken ownership of land and buildings and Scotland is seen as a pioneer in the field. The roots of this community revolution were not in the corridors of government, but in croft house kitchens and community halls. They weren't led by land developers or lawyers, but by school cooks and posties, by creel fisherman, nurses, students, and gardeners. Modest, ordinary people who achieved extraordinary things by challenging the status quo and changing the structure of how land could be owned.

The 100 Years of Community Ownership project will gather histories and archives from community landowners around Scotland and share the inspiring stories it collects with the wider public.

Caroline Clark, The National Lottery Heritage Fund Director for Scotland, said: "The story of community ownership is a story of people. Scotland can say with some pride that, from the early pioneers of the Stornoway Trust to more than 500 community ownership success stories today, it has taken a lead.

"This 100th anniversary year is the perfect opportunity to ensure we capture and preserve the stories of the ordinary people who brought about extraordinary changes to ownership of the land and buildings their communities most valued. It is thanks to National Lottery players that we are supporting this project exploring the people's heritage in community ownership."

Lindsay Chalmers, Development Manager at Community Land Scotland said "we know that every community buyout is an epic journey in its own right. Volunteers, driven by a desire to create a better place for future generations, put endless hours into making a success of their buyouts, but they rarely realise how important their own journey is to Scotland's wider story. We know that documents relating to the buyout can get shredded and key people leave communities, so this project provides a unique opportunity to gather and share stories before they are lost. We will be working with the National Library of Scotland, National Museums of Scotland and local archiving organisations to ensure that the records we collect are embedded into Scotland's history."



The 100 Years of Community Ownership project will have several strands. Community Land Scotland will train up community landowners throughout Scotland to collect oral histories and archive their records, which will then be shared on a publicly available web site. A 'Simon Fraser Memorial Series' of lectures and events will take place in 2024, providing an opportunity to discuss what can be learned from community landowners' history and how this can influence Scotland in the future. This series is named in memory of the solicitor, Simon Fraser, who supported many of the early buyouts including Eigg, Gigha, South Uist and Galson Estate, as well as the Assynt Crofters buyout.

In early 2024, communities in six community ownership "cold spots" - areas with low levels of community landownership - will be able to attend events to learn more about the benefits of owning land and buildings.

The stories gathered through the project will then be taken on a tour of Scotland in summer 2024, in partnership with the Travelling Gallery, Scotland's contemporary art gallery in a bus.

Claire Craig, Travelling Gallery Curator, said "Travelling Gallery are thrilled to be part of the 100 year celebrations of community ownership in Scotland. We're looking forward to working with Community Land Scotland and using our incredible reach and take the exciting new exhibition to communities across Scotland, including those who have played pivotal roles in the successes of community ownership."

#### **Notes for the editor:**

**Community Land Scotland** is the membership organisation for Scotland's community landowners. [www.communitylandscotland.org.uk](http://www.communitylandscotland.org.uk)

About **The National Lottery Heritage Fund**: Using money raised by the National Lottery, they inspire, lead and resource the UK's heritage to create positive and lasting change for people and communities, now and in the future. [www.heritagefund.org.uk](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk).

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Since The National Lottery began in 1994, National Lottery players have raised over £43 billion for projects and more than 635,000 grants have been awarded across the UK.

#### **Photos:**

The attached photo is of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust, one of the first of the modern wave of community landowners.

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