

THE SCOTTISH LAND FUND *

October 2025

Introduction

The Scottish Land Fund (SLF) will have its 25th anniversary in 2026. It is an incredible Scottish success story having funded the purchase of over 450 community buyouts, bringing community empowerment and economic and environmental regeneration to over a million people across the country.

The Fund has supported the purchase of a huge range of assets from whole islands, estates and forests in rural areas through to vital community and green space in marginalised urban communities. The benefits include Scotland developing world-leading approaches to tackling rural depopulation and new routes for urban communities to take control of local development and build community cohesion.

SLF Impact

Funding invested into communities:

Since the SLF began, over £90,000,000 has been invested into 394 rural community projects and 71 urban community projects, not including the 21 acquisitions funded by the Lottery's Growing Community Assets programme. That's the equivalent spend of just 1.6km of the original Edinburgh tramline now invested in communities who are delivering meaningful local change across the whole of Scotland.

Community land acquired:

Over 290,000 acres - that's close to three quarters of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park being brought into community ownership with support from the Scottish Land Fund!



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A Brief History



2001

The Scottish Land Fund is established as part of the National Lottery's New Opportunities Fund to help rural communities take ownership of land and assets that matter to them.



2002

The Isle of Gigha becomes one of the most iconic community buyouts, with residents purchasing the island with SLF support.



2006

The first phase of the Fund comes to an end, having made over 230 grants and helped nearly 200 communities, establishing the SLF as a cornerstone of Scotland's journey towards greater community ownership and land reform.



2012

Due to high demand and previous successes, the SLF is re-established by the Scottish Government and delivered in partnership through the National Lottery Community Fund and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.



2016

Funding is increased to £10 million per year and scope is extended to include both rural and urban communities, fostering sustainable development and strengthening communities across the whole of Scotland.



By 2025

Since its re-establishment by the Scottish Government, the Scottish Land Fund has supported the delivery of 465 community projects across Scotland, with the Fund continuing to support communities to build resilience and sustainability through the ownership and management of land and buildings.

How the Scottish Land Fund works now

The Scottish Land Fund gives communities the support they need to take ownership of land and buildings. The Fund now has two stages.

Stage 1 helps the community and funder decide if the buyout is feasible and beneficial and how much it will cost. This includes funding for feasibility studies and business plans as well as the valuation of the assets.

Stage 2 is for the purchase of the land or building and, importantly, for Development Officer support to get the project up and running. Projects funded by the SLF must be community led, controlled by local residents, and benefit a clearly defined geographic area with any income reinvested locally. Match-funding is required. With dedicated advisers on hand throughout, communities not only secure funding but also expert support to help them turn their ideas into reality.

Success Stories



Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust

In 2002, with support from the Scottish Land Fund and Highlands & Islands Enterprise Community Land Unit, the residents of Gigha bought their island in one of Scotland's most iconic and renowned community buyouts. The island had previously passed through several private landowners and was suffering from population decline, derelict housing and poor infrastructure, leading to the community taking interest when the island came onto the market. In the years that have followed, the community have reversed population decline and created jobs and award-winning housing as well as invested in renewable energy through three community-owned wind turbines known as the "Dancing Ladies".

Bonnymuir Green Community Trust

A group of residents came together looking to develop a derelict Bowling Club with the aim of retaining the historical space as a community resource. With support from the Scottish Land Fund alongside other fundraising efforts, Bonnymuir Green Community Trust was able to ownership of the land and the group's vision came to life. Since the land was purchased in 2018, the community has transformed the space into a vibrant urban garden and cafe. By 2022, the number of visitors had risen to 21,000 and the community benefited from 6,000 volunteer hours annually, providing food, learning and a social hub at the heart of the community.



North Edinburgh Arts

In August 2020, North Edinburgh Arts (NEA) secured £156,000 from the Scottish Land Fund to purchase its venue and garden from City of Edinburgh Council, enabling them to gain full community ownership in 2022. This investment has allowed NEA to be an equal partner with the City of Edinburgh Council in the redevelopment of Muirhouse town centre and the creation of the Macmillan Hub which now boasts an expanded cafe, enterprise units and bespoke workshop areas.

Langholm Initiative

In 2020, the Langholm Initiative embarked on a historic campaign to purchase 10,500 acres of moorland from the Duke of Buccleuch, aiming to establish a community-owned nature reserve. The land was purchased in two stages and the project secured grants from the Scottish Land Fund which contributed hugely to their fundraising efforts and was instrumental in securing the land. The nature reserve now serves as one of the biggest projects of its kind in the UK serving people, nature and climate.

Looking ahead

The Scottish Land Fund is a proven success story, supporting communities from islands to city neighbourhoods to drive local development, create lasting benefits and meet community needs. Continued and secure funding and a commitment to driving diversification of landownership from the next Scottish Parliament is vital to build on this momentum and enable more communities to create lasting social, economic, and environmental benefits across Scotland.



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