

Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Bill 2025 - Stage 1 Briefing

November 2025

Community Land Scotland view on Community Wealth Building

Community Land Scotland (CLS) welcomes the introduction of the Community Wealth Building Bill, and the principle of Community Wealth Building (CWB) in Scotland as means of furthering community ownership, building resilient local wellbeing economies and supporting a just transition to Net Zero.

CLS views the concept of CWB and its application in law as fundamental to transitioning to a wellbeing economy delivering sustainable economic, social and environmental development that enhances the prosperity of all of Scotland's people and places on an equitable basis. CWB must be at the heart of tackling the climate and biodiversity crises in ways that enable communities to benefit from the wealth associated with land and other assets, rather than such wealth being extracted from the places where they live, to little or no community benefit.

CWB needs to be done by communities for communities. That is not to dismiss the crucial multi-faceted role that local authorities and other public bodies have in delivering CWB. However, CLS strongly contends that a major part of that role must be for local authorities and other public bodies to act as supportive enablers for communities to generate and retain community 'wealth' from the bottom-up, both for their benefit and the wider public good.

Community Land Scotland view on the Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Bill

CLS welcomes the introduction of a statutory framework to advance CWB, without which there is a risk that it is seen as optional or discretionary. As noted by the Committee, embedding principles within legislation will ensure that CWB creates an 'obligation to act' within Scottish Government and the wider public sector.

However, for CWB outcomes to be achieved, this obligation must extend beyond the public sector. The Bill as currently drafted, does not sufficiently draw in the private sector or fully reflect the important role that community organisations already play. Mechanisms and intentions are needed to draw the private sector into CWB practices as private

interests will be a key driver of achieving CWB aims. Without this, there is a risk of ongoing economic leakage with wealth continuing to be extracted from local areas.

Focusing exclusively on the public sector also risks creating a ‘top-down’ CWB agenda which overlooks and fails to build upon the significant grassroots CWB practice already happening across Scotland. **Scotland has a unique and resilient existing model of CWB in community ownership.** This secures local democratic control of building and assets, prevents economic leakage through an ‘asset lock’ and ensures that wealth generated in local areas is circulated and multiplied within those same areas.

Central to this existing model is the principle that **CWB needs to be done by communities, for communities.** A large part of the role of public bodies and local authorities should be to act as supportive enablers for communities to generate and retain community ‘wealth’ from the bottom-up, both for their benefit and in the wider public good.

Community Wealth Building Statement

CLS is supportive of the introduction of an overarching CWB Statement and for this to be reviewed within 5 years and for a new statement to be laid before Parliament every 5 years thereafter. A national statement has the potential to provide strategic coherence, set clear expectations and ensure that CWB legislation is having real-world impact.

We particularly welcome the inclusion of suggested measures that Scottish Ministers might take, and their recognition in particular that diversifying ownership of land and other assets through community ownership is a key way to achieve CWB outcome, redistributing control over local assets, anchoring wealth within communities and enabling local people to shape and benefit from the economic activity around them.

However, we share concerns raised by stakeholders and reflected in the Committee Stage 1 report that these are just measures that ‘may’ be included in the statement. For the statement to drive meaningful change, its contents must be sufficiently strong, clear and directive. To avoid undermining the transformative potential of the legislation, **measures should be framed as a ‘must’ to ensure consistency and impact across Scotland.**

We would also agree with stakeholder views in the Stage 1 Report that the term ‘economic growth’ is ambiguous and can narrow the way we think about economic development. It is vital that the statement recognises that financial wealth cannot be separated from social, cultural, environmental, and community wealth. To achieve CWB

aims, **economic growth must be sustainable and inclusive**, benefitting local communities, small businesses and community enterprises, while not exacerbating the pressures on our environment and life-supporting ecosystems.

Community Wealth Building action plans

CLS is broadly supportive of the introduction of CWB action plans and considers the proposed approach to publish and implement plans within 3 years of the Bill coming into force, with plans being revised at least every 5 years as proportionate and achievable. These plans have the potential to transform national ambition into meaningful local action.

A central element of this must be the role of communities in the design, implementation and review of CWB action plans. We support the Committee's call for the Scottish Government to set out how these plans will function as 'living documents' focused on delivery and anchored in community representation and participation.

CLS note the Committee's recognition of the vital importance of empowered communities in advancing CWB, drawing on successes in Alloa and Irvine. We therefore support Scottish Community Alliance's **calls in the Stage 1 Report for formal recognition of third sector and community groups as essential delivery partners in shaping and delivering CWB action plans**. While large public bodies should be important drivers of CWB, community trusts and community businesses are already drivers of CWB. They are existing important organisations as properly constituted entities, which employ staff and have strong local presences in their areas. This becomes particularly significant in areas poorly serviced by the public sector.

We support calls for Scottish National Investment Bank, National Park Authorities, Forestry and Land Scotland, and Crown Estate Scotland to be included in the list of 'relevant public bodies' (rather than 'specified public bodies') due to the size of the landholdings they have a controlling interest in, as well as the significant financial resources they are responsible for managing. As the Committee noted, the Scottish National Investment Bank have a prominent role in supporting economic development, and therefore we welcome their querying of this omission from the list of specified public bodies.

The Stage 1 report raises the important question of resourcing. Adequate support and capacity will be essential to ensure that action plans can be delivered consistently across Scotland. We recognise the resource pressures facing public bodies and see considerable

value in enabling collaboration between the public sector and community organisations which will help build capacity, share knowledge and accelerate the adoption of CWB practices.

It is also vital to acknowledge the cost of *not* doing this work. When public finances are pressed, the case for CWB is even stronger as we must try to prevent economic leakage and ensure that public expenditure is resulting in wealth being kept in local areas. The economic extraction taking place as a result of public subsidies feeding unsustainable land price increases and investor landownership in Scotland is a case in point. If properly resourced and collaboratively delivered, CWB action plans represent a major opportunity for local authorities in particular to secure and grow local economic development.

In the Stage 1 report, the access to finance pillar was viewed by Local Authorities as the most challenging to progress. Despite this, expanding access to finance has the most transformational potential to deliver tangible improvements to communities across Scotland. In considering how CWB partnerships would facilitate the finance pillar, **CLS would suggest considering the mandating of a role for the Scottish National Investment Bank in providing finance for CWB activities, noting that ‘place’ is one of SNIB’s three missions.** Additionally, we would **strongly support the establishment of a community wealth fund** which could support communities to acquire revenue-generating assets.¹

We welcome the Committee’s ask for the Scottish Government to consider specific suggestions raised in evidence sessions related to the CWB action plans, particularly around including diversifying ownership of energy assets as a measure, as well as aligning CWB action plans with Community Action Plans, Local Place Plans and Local Development Plans.² Additionally, we would support the Committee’s ask that wider policy actions suggested in evidence by stakeholders be considered that would support the practical delivery of CWB.³ This includes the following changes which would strengthen community ownership as a key pillar of CWB in Scotland:

- Reform of planning rules to encourage shared ownership of renewable energy projects
- Recommendations within SG recent review of Inclusive and Democratic Business Models (IDBMs) should be implemented

¹ [A proposal for a Scottish Community Wealth Fund – Community Land Scotland](#)

² [Stage 1 Report on the Community Wealth Building Scotland Bill](#) p26

³ [Stage 1 Report on the Community Wealth Building Scotland Bill](#) p27

- Public bodies should be required to offer surplus land and assets to community organisations before seeking commercial disposal
- Streamlining the community asset transfer process and strengthening public authorities' powers of compulsory purchase, sale, and community right to buy.

CLS published a briefing in February which adds further detail to these proposals.⁴

Guidance about Community Wealth Building

The practical impact of the Bill will depend heavily on the strength and clarity of the accompanying guidance. This guidance must demonstrate how public bodies can work meaningfully with the community sector, ensuring that community-led approaches are embedded in practice. As noted in the Stage 1 report, the Scottish Government has not explicitly set out how the guidance will be tracked or enforced. **It is essential that there are robust mechanisms for monitoring both the implementation and the impact of the guidance and associated CWB action plans.**

We support the Committee's recommendations for what the guidance should include and would emphasise the need for progress reports to contain measurable indicators of community involvement, asset ownership and local reinvestment. This is vital to ensure transparency, to demonstrate whether CWB legislation is genuinely shifting wealth and power towards communities, and to allow for continuity and ongoing improvements in public bodies CWB practice over time.

Overall, we see the Bill as a lean and light touch framework. The Scottish Government have shied away from a more structural and transformational piece of legislation that could have placed CWB at the heart of Scotland's economic transformation. By not explicitly engaging with the private, third or community sector the impact of the Bill will be severely curtailed.

There will need to be careful attention paid to how this legislation intersects with various other policy and legislative changes that could deliver CWB outcomes to ensure coherence. This includes the recently passed Land Reform Bill and the on-going reviews of Community Right to Buy, Community Asset Transfer and Compulsory Purchase and Sales Orders.

Whether or not the Bill will have meaningful real-world impact will depend on whether other sectors can be brought within scope of the legislation, as well as the content and

⁴ [Briefing-on-CWB-Bill-Community-Land-Scotland-February-2025.pdf](#)

strength of the statement, guidance and action plans, and then in turn how they are implemented.

About Community Land Scotland

- Community Land Scotland was established to provide a collective voice for community landowners in Scotland.
- We have 140 member organisations across Scotland, ranging from community landowners of major crofting estates in the Western Isles to inner city community hubs in diverse communities.
- We believe that we cannot create a more socially just Scotland without addressing the issue of concentrated land ownership, with the growth of community land ownership a key part of developing a more diverse land ownership pattern
- We believe that communities should have the opportunity to lead development in their areas and an important way of achieving this is the democratic ownership of local land and assets.
- We are a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. We are members of the [International Land Coalition](http://www.international-land-coalition.org), which seeks to support community land rights and land reform movements around the world.

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