



Forestry and
Land Scotland
Coilltearachd agus
Fearann Alba

Community Asset Transfer Scheme

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
6th Annual Report

1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

6th Annual Report

Launched in January 2017, Forestry and Land Scotland's Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS) sets out how we deliver the asset transfer rights for communities (Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, Part 5) for our national forests and land.

This fifth annual report covers the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. During that period, Forestry and Land Scotland has:

- **validated five requests for ownership of sites** on our national forests and land
- issued decision notices **to approve three requests**
- **completed five transfers of ownership**

Three of the validated requests were for land notified for sale under our New Woodland Investment Programme, now closed. One request was for a site notified in 2016 and the other two for sites notified in 2018. Two requests were from communities that had identified areas of our national forest and land that could contribute to their objectives and benefit their communities.

Since the scheme launched in January 2017 up until 31 March 2023, FLS had received a total of 31 requests. 25 have been approved, of which:

- 22 sales have completed, totalling 593 hectares
- 2 renewables leases have completed and the hydro schemes have been commissioned
- requests for 5 sites are approved and in progress to complete
- 1 request is awaiting a decision
- 2 requests approved by FLS have been withdrawn by the community

A full list of asset transfer requests received for Scotland's national forests and land, and progress to date is shown in Annex 1.

Since 31 March 2023, Forestry and Land Scotland has approved 1 further request.

Empowering Communities

Forests now cover over [1.4 million hectares](#) of Scotland. Much of this is privately owned but around one third of it – as well as a diversity of open land habitats – is publicly owned and looked after by the Scottish Government land management agency, Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS). These publicly owned forests are referred to as **Scotland's National Forest and Land**.

FLS Corporate Plan 2022-25 includes a commitment to produce the **Communities Strategy for Scotland's National Forests and Land**. The Strategy sets out the principles and strategic priorities for how we work with communities to make best use of Scotland's national forest and land.

The draft Strategy was consulted on between May and August 2022, inviting feedback from people across Scotland on how to further grow our work with communities and to let us know what is working well, what can be done better and what challenges and barriers need to be overcome so that more communities' ambitions can be realised. The consultation was circulated to over 700 stakeholders including local communities, communities of interest and NGOs. 45 responses were received and following analysis of the consultation responses, the Strategy is being finalised and published.

The Communities Strategy sits alongside our [Visitor Services Strategy](#), and focusses on how communities can get more involved in the decisions, management and use of the national forests and land, including for health and wellbeing. Following on from consultation and publication of the Strategy, FLS has been working on actions to deliver the principles in the Strategy, and will be engaging with stakeholders on development of the Communities Action Plan for Scotland's National Forests and Land.

Engaging and involving communities in decisions relating to land

Engaging and involving communities in decisions relating to land is one of the key Principles in the Communities Strategy, and our aim is to promote greater community engagement in decisions about land. The Strategy also sets out what we are doing to improve consultation and engagement on land management planning, place based planning and masterplans and working at landscape scale.

Our [Land Management Plans](#) cover most of Scotland's national forests and land, and each Plan sets out how we intend to manage a specific area of land for a period of ten years. The plans are published online and we consult with communities and other stakeholders to gather a range of views. After public consultation and approval, Land Management Plans are put into action by our local teams.

We currently have 52 active consultations on plans due for renewal, and many other plans are at various stages of review and informal consultation. In total we have around 360 active land management plans which are available [online](#) or by contacting our [Regional offices](#).

Further guidance on community projects and activities on the national forests and land are also available on our [Communities web pages](#). You can also find out more about the land that we manage from the map based [Register of Land](#) and from the [OpenData](#) website, which has much more spatial data that people can explore.

Engaging communities in the creation, management and use of forests and woodlands

Key principles of our Communities Strategy are to support the transition to a fairer, greener Scotland and to support sustainable and thriving rural communities. We aim to support communities to make best use of Scotland's national forests and land and to do so in a just and fair way, delivering social, environmental and economic benefits.

Many local communities and communities of interest already use the national forests and land for a wide range of activities. Many activities can be freely carried out under the [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#) such as cycling, climbing and camping. Groups can also get permission for activities which require more formal arrangements, such as community events, habitat management, or path maintenance to improve access to a woodland, and further information is available on both our [Communities](#), and [Events and Activities pages](#)

Longer-term projects and activities can be carried out through agreements and leases, such as woodland management agreements, leases for renewables projects or public access projects. We also work with communities of interest including environmental NGOs, sports clubs, history and arts groups, and in partnership with communities and other bodies. We work closely with communities to put in place the right agreement that will both deliver their objectives and manage our national forests and land responsibly and sustainably.

This spring we engaged the charity [Outside the Box](#) to help us refresh our connections with underrepresented groups and organisations that represent them. The workshop explored ways of reducing barriers to access. There is always more to do here but this was a helpful exercise, we have established new connections which we hope will lead to further community involvement including Community Asset Transfer.

At 30 June 2023, we have 99 current partnerships, agreements or leases with 86 community groups, taking the total to 144 communities that are actively engaged or developing projects.

Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS)

The [Community Asset Transfer Scheme \(CATS\)](#) enables communities to take greater control of the land through ownership or lease. Over the last year, we have completed the sale of five further sites to communities. As at publication on 30 June 2023, 20 transfers of ownership and two leases had been completed.

We continually engage with communities across Scotland to provide information on the land we manage and talk through options and solutions to best achieve their aspirations. Our Community Asset Transfer Manager and the National Community Advisor, together with our Regional land management and Land Agency teams, meet with communities to discuss proposals and options for the use or transfer of land, and to signpost communities to relevant support, such as is available from the [Scottish Land Fund](#) and [Community Ownership Support Service](#).

Over the last year we have approved three asset transfer requests:

- **Argyll Beaver Centre, Barrandaimh, Knapdale:** the Heart of Argyll Wildlife Organisation (HAWO) has leased the buildings at Barrandaimh from FLS since 2017, creating the Argyll Beaver Centre a tourist information point, wildlife ranger and environmental interpretation, education and information centre and community resource. HAWO are purchasing the buildings the centre and community space, including space for visiting schools and other groups, facilities for wildlife visitors and local people, and restoring the land to wet meadow status.
- **Rosal Clearance Village, Strathnaver:** North Sutherland Community Forest Trust (NSCFT) are acquiring 40 hectares of land at Rosal Clearance Village, one of the largest once thriving Highland townships along Strathnaver, cleared of its inhabitants in 1814. NSCFT will work with Strathnaver Museum to preserve, interpret and promote the clearance village and other historic sites for locals and visitors, including improving recreational infrastructure, guided walks and schools' visits, enhancing interpretation and promotion and developing opportunities for community volunteering.
- **Slattadale, Loch Maree, Gairloch:** The Slattadale SCIO is purchasing a small area of land by Loch Maree for a sustainable off-campus outdoor education facility to benefit the Gairloch High School Associated School Group's 3-18 community. The community stretches from Shildaig to Laide and Dundonnell. It will be used for various educational activities, such as outdoor learning and rural skills, with environmentally sustainable permanent/semi-permanent structures to be installed over time.

And we have a pipeline of around 25 projects in development, many supported by the Scottish Land Fund's Stage 1 funding.

CATS Updates

Over the last year, five sales have completed. Two are for mountain bike skills trails – the **Deeside Bike Collective** in Corsee Wood, Banchory and **Arran High School Mountain Bike Club** in Dyemill Forest, Lamlash, and the trails are now under construction with funding from a range of funders including SportScotland and the local fundraising. The **BLS Community Trust** acquired the Broch Field in Strathyre as a community space, supported by the Scottish Land Fund, hosting local events such as the Strathyre Festival and Community Festival. **Tain Rifle and Pistol Club** also acquired the site they have leased for the last 40 years from FLS to secure a safe and controlled venue for target shooting for the local community.

The sale of 50 hectares of the Lower Ardochy woodland to **Glengarry Community Woodlands** completed in September 2022 to develop woodland crofts, working in partnership with the **Woodland Croft Partnership** and the **Communities Housing Trust**. The Communities Housing Trust have purchased the neighbouring 19.5 hectares from FLS and have been consulting with the community on Phase 1 of the plans for 4 affordable homes and 2 pilot woodland crofts.

The second hydro lease completed under CATS, and seventh community hydro scheme on the national forests and land, the **Abhainn Greadhain Community Hydro Scheme** has now been commissioned by LEG Power Lochaber, supported by Energy4All. The scheme is community owned with all surplus profits going to Lochaber Environmental Group (LEG) who work to preserve, conserve, and restore the environment of Lochaber for the benefit of the local communities.

The **Scottish Crannog Centre** new crannog centre and museum at Dalerb, Loch Tay was approved in September 2022, and the new buildings will use local timber from the national forests and land at Drummond Hill. **Arkaig Community Forest** has set up its deer larder and tree nursery at the Clunes Forest School Buildings and Woodlands transferred in June 2021. **Carsphairn Community Woodland** acquired 48 hectares of woodland at Muirdrochwood in 2021, and a SoSE grant has enabled them to build a community forest shed and purchase machinery to manage the woodland, run forestry and rural skills training courses, and set up a sustainable woodfuel supply. Support from Galloway Glens and other partners helped to construct a Wildlife Hide as create a space for school groups to learn about wildlife and holding community events.

For smaller assets, where there is clear community benefit and support, we aim to keep the process as straightforward as possible, and community transfer bodies can acquire smaller sites assets as direct sales. A number of projects are going through this process including a native tree nursery and a campsite for a local Scout group.

CATS Evaluation Panel

FLS welcomed five new members to the CATS Evaluation Panel in 2022-23, and appointed Professor Bill Slee, Honorary Fellow of the James Hutton Institute and a Panel member since 2021 as the new Chair of the Panel. The five new members who join existing Panel members, Bill Slee and Courtney Hyde Peyton are Lucile Black, Ed Pybus, Eilidh Todd, Gemma Campbell and Pete Crane. More information on the CATS Evaluation Panel members is available on the [CATS web pages](#).

Providing independent and impartial advice, the Panel supports the evaluation of requests and also provides feedback and advice to communities making a request, strengthening many community proposals.

The new members replace Panel members who have stepped down, with the three longest serving – Sir Patrick Hunter Blair, Professor Anna Lawrence and Chair, Judith Webb - completing their second terms and standing down in February 2023. They had all been Panel members since CATS establishment in 2017.

FLS has a rolling recruitment process to ensure the Panel retains continuity of knowledge and experience. This is promoted through a range of outlets, including forest industry portals and GoodMoves, SCVO's jobs portal for careers in civil society, charity and voluntary sector. FLS also promotes via social media, and directly to key stakeholders including the Community Woodland Association, Community Land Scotland and Scottish Environment LINK.

ANNEX 1: Forestry and Land Scotland: Asset Transfer Requests

Table 1: Requests validated 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

Property Address	Community Transfer Body	Validation date	Size (ha)	Type – purchase or lease	Proposed use	Outcome	Status
<u>Rosal Clearance Village</u> Strathnaver, Highland	North Sutherland Community Forest Trust	09-Aug-22	40	Purchase	Historic site	Approved 16-Jan-23	Approved
<u>Slattadale</u> Gairloch, Highland	Slattadale	19-Aug-22	0.58	Purchase	Outdoor education facility	Approved 27-Mar-23*	Approved
<u>Argyll Beaver Centre</u> Barrandaimh, Argyll & Bute	Heart of Argyll Wildlife Organisation	04-Oct-22	0.52	Purchase	Wildlife and environment centre	Approved 20-Dec-22	Approved
<u>Taymount and Five Mile Woods</u> Stanley, Perth & Kinross	West Stormont Woodland Group	19-Dec-22	289	Purchase	Community woodland	Awaiting decision*	Validated
<u>Longrigg Wood</u> Strontian, Highland	Sunart Community Company	09-Jan-23	87	Purchase	Community woodland	Awaiting decision**	Validated

* Decision deadline extended by agreement

** Decision to approve issued 3 May 2023

ANNEX 2: Previous Requests

	21 January 2017 to 31 March 2022
	1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023
	Progress since 31 March 2023

Table 2: Requests validated 21 January 2017 to 31 March 2022

Property Address	Community Transfer Body	Validation date	Size (ha)	Type – purchase or lease	Proposed use	Outcome	Status
Dyemill MTB Trails Lamlash, Isle of Arran	Arran High School Mountain Bike Club	15-Dec-21	5.7	Purchase	Mountain bike trails	Approved 07-Mar-21	Completed 20-Nov-22
Littleburn Road Munlochy, Highland	Roots & Growth	25-May-21	0.45	Purchase	Community hub and wellbeing centre	Approved 30-Sep-21	Withdrawn
Lower Ardochy Invergarry, Highland	Glengarry Community Woodlands	05-May-21	47.4	Purchase	Woodland crofts	Approved 06-Sep-21	Completed 09-Sep-22
Inchree Barn, Inchree, Highland	Nether Lochaber Community Association	28-Apr-21	0.05	Purchase	Community hub and café	Approved 23-Aug-21	Under offer
Broch Field Strathyre	BLS Community Trust	12-Mar-21	1.9	Ownership	Community recreation area	Approved 17-Jun-21	Completed 20-Apr-22
Ardlarach Quarry Tain	Tain Rifle & Pistol Club	24-Nov-20	5.3	Ownership	Target and outdoor shooting range	Approved 24-Mar-21	Completed 15-Sep-22
Abhainn Greadhain Hydro Scheme, Glenachulish	Lochaber Environmental Group	23-Sep-20	28*	Lease	Hydroelectric scheme	Approved 01-Mar-21	Completed 12-Aug-21
Insh Woodland and Grazings Insh, Newtonmore	Inch Community Holdings	25-Aug-20	6.3	Ownership	Community woodland and grazings	Approved 05-Nov-20	Completed 14-June-21
The Scottish Crannog Centre, Dalerb, Loch Tay	The Crannog Centre	7-Apr-20	4	Ownership	New museum and visitor centre	Approved 16-Jun-20	Completed 11-Jun-21

Property Address	Community Transfer Body	Validation date	Size (ha)	Type – purchase or lease	Proposed use	Outcome	Status
Inverawe Woodland Inverawe, Argyll & Bute	Inverawe Community Woodland	19-Mar-20	6	Ownership	Community woodland	Approved 08-Jun-20	Completed 7-Jun-21
Inverarish hydroelectric scheme Isle of Raasay, Highland	Raasay Development Trust	17-Dec-19	18	Lease	Hydroelectric scheme	Approved 29-May-20	Completed 7-Jan-21
Coilhullan Wood Callander, Stirling	Callander Community Development Trust	23-Oct-19	83	Ownership	Community woodland	Approved 21-Apr-20	<i>Withdrawn</i>
Clunes Buildings and Woodland Clunes, Highland	Arkaig Community Forest	3-Sep-19	6	Ownership	Community woodland	Approved 06-Jan-20	Completed 25-Jun-21
Corsee Wood Banchory, Aberdeenshire	Deeside Bike Collective	3-Sep-19	13	Ownership	Mountain bike trails	Approved 02-Mar-20	Completed 22-Apr-22
Corrow Gravel Pit Lochgoilhead, Cowal	Lochgoil Watersports Cub	21-Nov-18	2.15	Ownership	Recreation	Approved 15-Feb-19	Completed 30-Oct-19
The Gantry Craignure, Isle of Mull	Mull and Iona Community Trust	15-Nov-18	0.35	Ownership	Community services	Approved 7-Feb-19	Completed 5-Feb-21
Muidrochwood Carsphairn, Galloway	Carsphairn Community Woodland	7-Nov-18	324	Ownership	Community woodland	Approved 03-May-19 Revised 07-Jan-20	Completed 31-Mar-21
Glenan Wood Portavadie, Cowal	Friends of Glenan Wood	02-Nov-18	144	Ownership	Community woodland	Approved 10-May-19	Completed 20-Dec-19
Seneval Carradale, South Kintyre	Carradale Community Trust	22-Oct-18	1.9	Ownership	Community services	Approved 07-Feb-19	Completed 16-Sep-19
Ardura Craignure, Mull	Mull and Iona Community Trust	03-Apr-18	201	Ownership	Community woodland	Approved 21-Dec-18	Completed 13-Sep-19
Eshiels Wood Peebles, Scottish Borders	Peebles Community Trust	22-Mar-18	6.9	Ownership	Community woodland	Approved 04-Jun-18	Completed 15-Jan-19
Dronley Wood Auchterhouse, Angus	Dronley Community Woodland	19-Mar-18	50.7	Ownership	Community woodland	Approved 04-Jun-18	Completed 28-Mar-19
Leadburn Wood Leadburn, Scottish Borders	Friends of Leadburn Community Woodland	26-Feb-18	9.4	Ownership	Community woodland	Approved 04-Jun-18	Completed 28-Mar-19
Carron Valley Carron Bridge, Stirling	Valley Renewables Group	20-Dec-17	21.3	Ownership	Community woodland	Approved 28-Feb-18	Completed 12-Oct-18

Property Address	Community Transfer Body	Validation date	Size (ha)	Type – purchase or lease	Proposed use	Outcome	Status
The Fairy Pools Car Park Minginish, Isle of Skye	Minginish Community Hall Association	16-Aug-17	12.3	Ownership	Parking facilities	Approved 03-Nov-17	Completed 06-Jul-18
Gamescleuch Forest and the Ettrick Marshes Ettrick, Scottish Borders	Ettrick & Yarrow Community Development Company	26-Jun-17	173	Ownership	Community woodland	Refused 03-Nov-17	Refused following Review by Scottish Ministers