

A Manifesto for Action –

**Turning Our
Vision into Reality.**



**scottish
community
alliance**

local people leading

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Introduction

While our vision is focused on the long-term, there is much that can be achieved in the short to medium term to begin the process of realising many of its elements. Legislative and other policy measures during the current session of Parliament offer important opportunities in that regard. Examples of the former include the forthcoming Community Wealth Building Bill, Land Reform Bill, Agriculture Bill, Human Rights Bill and Circular Economy Bill. There is also scope for framing non-legislative policy measures, such as the updated Climate Change Plan, to drive change, especially across policy silos, and deliver elements of our vision.

The remainder of this document provides a Manifesto for Action to begin the process of putting SCA's vision for a sustainable Scotland into practice. It does so by consolidating key proposals originally contained in our responses to specific Scottish Government consultations relating to legislation due to be introduced to Parliament during the current session.¹ These proposals are organised and discussed under the following inter-related themes in the remainder of the paper:

- **Governance and Decision-Making**
- **Land, Assets and Resources**
- **Local Economy**
- **People**

It is important to note that many of the issues on which we make proposals for action are intrinsically cross-cutting in nature, and consequently demand a holistic policy approach. For example, the provision of affordable housing is a social issue which is critical for community and cultural resilience. It is also an economic issue, not least because a lack of affordable housing for rent or purchase within communities represents a major barrier to staff recruitment and local economic development. SCA therefore advocates for such an approach to be adopted in practice by policymakers, and we contend that the following thematically organised proposals provide a blueprint to enable that to happen.

¹ SCA's responses to individual Scottish Government consultations can be accessed at <https://scottishcommunityalliance.org.uk/>

1. Governance and Decision-Making

The principle of subsidiarity must be hard-wired into economic and other governance structures, with power, responsibility and budgets devolved to the most local level possible.

Subsidiarity - the principle that a central authority should perform only those tasks which cannot be performed at a more local level - is fundamental to SCA's vision of a Scotland where decision-making is local by default, and community-led action is central to community wealth building, planning, and tackling climate change.

The Local Governance Review was launched in 2017² to enable Scotland's diverse communities and places to have greater control and influence over decisions that affect them most. Consultation and engagement exercises demonstrated that there is a clear appetite for a reinvented modern democracy across Scotland which addresses inequalities, including how power and resources are shared. Overwhelmingly, people declared that they want far greater control over the future of the places in which they live.

However, whilst the Scottish Government accepts that community, fiscal and functional empowerment in all communities and for all public services provides the route map to this future, delivery has been lacking. Urgent progress therefore needs to be made to facilitate genuinely local democracy by an enabling state.

SCA views Community Wealth Building (CWB) and its application as fundamental to achieving that subsidiarity objective. We have argued elsewhere³ that CWB is an essential component of transitioning to a wellbeing economy that delivers sustainable

economic, social and environmental development which enhances the prosperity of all of Scotland's people and places all on an equitable basis.

A genuinely radical and transformative approach to CWB in the service of a wellbeing economy demands that more decision-making power be devolved into the hands of communities. We know that Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) is a proven model for empowering communities to make the places where they live more resilient and sustainable: by building local knowledge and skills; by helping to put innovative, locally generated ideas into practice; and by encouraging co-operation within and between communities.

Similarly, National Planning Framework 4 places climate and biodiversity emergencies at the heart of planning policy. These laudable principles must be carried through as local authorities develop their own Local Development Plans and planning decisions must reflect the significant weight to be given to climate and biodiversity policies, with communities empowered to challenge decisions and plans that do not reflect these principles.

We also know that much remains to be done to ensure that genuinely local democracy is facilitated to enable the above conditions to be met. For those reasons, SCA calls for the following actions in relation to Governance and Decision-Making.

² <https://www.gov.scot/news/local-governance-review/>

³ <https://scottishcommunityalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/SCA-Response-to-SG-Consultation-Paper-Building-Community-Wealth-in-Scotland-1.pdf>

1.1 Local Governance Review

The Local Governance Review is the opportunity to address the long-standing deficit in local democracy by exploring new models of governance that sit closer to communities. These new expressions of local democracy, to be consolidated by primary legislation, will enable community wealth to be built from the bottom up and support the transition to a wellbeing economy.

Simultaneously, local government must be repowered, both fiscally and functionally, as per the Verity House Agreement. Specifically, the European Charter of Self Government should be incorporated into Scots Law thereby institutionalising the maxim “local by default, national by agreement”. The principle of local governance should be further extended to the management and protection of Scotland’s marine and coastal assets, involving new structures for community governance for the marine realm.

1.2 Human Rights Bill

The forthcoming Human Rights Bill must incorporate into Scots law a range of economic, social and cultural rights, including from the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDW); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD). The new rights must be incorporated with teeth and be enforceable so that public bodies have a duty to comply with the rights in the Bill, with an accessible route to hold duty-bearing organisations to account.

We argue that underpinning all of these is the right to a healthy environment. There are six interdependent features of the substantive right to a healthy environment: clean air, safe climate, safe water and adequate sanitation, healthy and sustainably produced food, non-toxic environments in which to live, work, study and play, and healthy biodiversity and ecosystems. These require standalone protections and must ensure the highest standards are met to ensure policy coherence and coordination across all public sectors.

1.3 Community Wealth Building

Community Wealth Building (CWB) must be permanently ‘locked-in’ as a cross-cutting priority for all Scottish Government policy portfolios, ensuring that policies across all departments are designed in ways that align with, rather than impede, the scope for implementing CWB principles within localities. For example, it is important to recognise and fully facilitate the role of community energy as a contributor to community wealth building.

1.3.1 Duty to advance Community Wealth Building

A duty to advance CWB should be placed upon Scottish Ministers, and public sector bodies including – but not limited to – those bodies involved in community planning, and in the delivery of City-Region Deals as appropriate.

1.3.2 Community Wealth Building Commission

A Community Wealth Building Commission should be established, as a further important step in embedding CWB as a permanent feature of the wellbeing economy.

1.3.3 Community Wealth Building Statement

Scottish Ministers should produce a high-level Community Wealth Building Statement, similar to the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement (LRRS), provisions for which were included in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016. This Statement should include principles relating to CWB that Scottish Ministers must have regard to when developing policy in relation to their portfolios, and all public sector organisations would be required to have regard for the Statement's principles when undertaking specific statutory and – if deemed applicable – non-statutory functions.

1.3.4 Public Sector Community Wealth Building Strategies

All public sector organisations should be mandated to produce individual, time-bound CWB strategies and action plans, specific to these organisations. These strategies and action plans should detail how they will address CWB's principles in practice in relation to the implementation of specific functions.

1.4 Community-Led Local Development Funding

Future Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) programmes should have:

- a significantly larger budget allocation than previous years, with potential to fund multi-year projects
- full devolution of decision making and project management to Local Action Groups, in keeping with the “locally-led” ethos of CLLD

1.4.1 Extension of local decision-making over funding

The following measures will extend and enhance local and community involvement and control over funding decisions.

- The development of Local Action Groups (LAGs) as independent, constituted bodies (as is common across Europe), with local membership, control and management should be supported.
- The scope of LAGs should be extended to enhance local decision-making and control over the distribution of a wider range of community development and regeneration funds.
- The LAG model of local decision-making should be extended beyond rural Scotland by establishing community-led bodies to make decisions on community development and regeneration funding for urban areas.

2. Land, Assets and Resources

Scotland's land assets and natural resources, together with the wealth that flows from them must be owned and managed by and for the benefit of the many not the few.

It is widely recognised that Scotland has an unusually concentrated pattern of large-scale private rural land ownership; 67% of which has been estimated as being owned by 0.025% of the population.⁴ The scale and concentration of landholdings matters because how land is owned and used and, crucially, who benefits from these arrangements, is central to shaping what kind of nation Scotland aspires to be. Scotland's Land Question concerns the locus and exercise of landed power, whose interests that power serves, and to what purposes. In that sense, it is as much a question for the nation's urban places, as for its rural ones.

SCA argues that how Scotland's land is owned and used needs to benefit Scotland's communities, rather than privileged wealthy elites, in the service of the public interest and the common good. Much of Scotland's land reform policy focuses on diversifying the highly concentrated pattern of land

ownership highlighted above. For that to be achieved necessitates a more integrated and interventionist approach to land reform policy than has been evident to date; one that draws on a broad range of regulatory, distributive, and redistributive policy tools to serve the common good and the wider public interest. In turn, that has implications for the management of public land; the regulation of the rural land market, and land transfers more generally; the relationship between land rights and responsibilities; mechanisms for enabling more land to be transferred into community ownership and other forms of community control; and fiscal measures to ensure that land assets serve the common good.

Against that background, SCA therefore calls for the following actions to ensure that Scotland's land assets and natural resources can more effectively contribute to our vision for a sustainable Scotland.

2.1 Public Land and Assets

Scottish Ministers are Scotland's largest landowners, owning approximately 13% of Scotland, whilst other public bodies, including local authorities and health boards also have significant holdings. SCA contends that Community Wealth Building principles must be prioritised in the management of the public estate.

2.1.1 Powers for other bodies to manage land on behalf of Scottish Ministers

Scottish Ministers should be empowered to delegate responsibility for land management to community bodies or other appropriate bodies, such as local social enterprises, where they can demonstrate that so doing will deliver additional community and wider public benefit.

2.1.2 More sustainable use of the public estate

Property teams from local authorities and other public bodies should be mandated and supported to identify and safeguard sustainable unused land to provide community growing opportunities, including collective growing and sites that support Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises for urban, peri-urban and commercial growing, such as market gardens.

⁴ Warren, C. (2009). *Managing Scotland's Environment*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

2.1.3 Allotments and other community food growing models

A renewed commitment to deliver part 9 of the 2015 Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act is required to provide food growing opportunities through allotments and community gardens. Statutory oversight, vision and leadership, and resources for enforcement, must be provided by the Scottish Government.

2.1.4 Development of small-scale landholdings on Scottish Ministers' estate

Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) should be directed to take a more proactive role in developing or facilitating woodland crofts, woodland

small-holdings and woodlots on the National Forest Estate. Other land-owning public bodies should be directed to explore opportunities for the development of affordable small-scale landholdings for ownership or tenancy.

2.1.5 Common Good law

A new statutory framework, incorporating CWB principles, should be developed to modernise the arrangements governing Common Good property, as recommended by the Land Reform Review Group. There should be increased transparency regarding Common Good land and property, and increased scope for community participation in governance arrangements relating to Common Good land and property.

2.2 Private Land

A suite of legislative and fiscal interventions is required to regulate private landownership in the public interest, to prioritise sustainable use over speculation and ensure a fair distribution of benefits. Future fiscal measures must be aligned to deliver the full range of Government objectives in line with the National Performance Framework.

2.2.1 Duty to comply with Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement

All landowners and land managers should be expected to comply with the Land Rights and Responsibility Statement (LRRS) and its associated protocols, with a statutory duty imposed on large-scale landowners (defined by area and value).

The LRRS should be reviewed to ensure that enforceable requirements are unambiguously framed, and there should be a formal, open procedure for raising complaints.⁵

2.2.2 Public Interest Tests

A Public Interest Test (PIT) should be applied to transactions of all or part of large-scale landholdings and other locally-significant assets, with "large-scale" defined by size and value thresholds; all types of land transaction should be within the scope of the legislation.

2.2.3 Agricultural subsidy reform

In the forthcoming Agriculture Bill:

- All payments must be contingent on delivery of public benefit and outcomes relating to e.g. increased efficiencies, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and/or nature restoration and enhancement.
- A much greater proportion of the budget should be directed towards support for active land management and rural development (i.e. the proposed Tiers 3 and 4). Integrated land management approaches should be prioritised.
- There should be a more inclusive and balanced distribution of the budget between beneficiaries.

The Bill should also include mechanisms for capping of direct payments, means testing of recipients of direct payments, reduction or removal of the minimum area threshold for direct payments, support for urban farms and easier access for genuine new entrants to farming and crofting. Just transition principles should be embedded across all provisions and instruments, rather than being addressed by a stand-alone mechanism.

⁵ NB the LRRS and associated protocols apply to all public as well as private sector landowners.

2.2.4 Tax reforms

Tax reforms should include:

- a demand for immediate repatriation to Scotland of powers over Inheritance Tax and Capital Gains Tax and the declaration of the intention to remove these exemptions for land.
- alignment of the non-residential rates of Land and Buildings Transaction Tax to those for residential properties and introduction of new additional bands for higher value properties.
- a phased re-introduction of non-domestic rates for agricultural and forestry land.

2.2.5 A Community Wealth Fund

The Scottish Government should introduce a national Community Wealth Fund, funded through compulsory developer contributions from e.g. onshore and offshore renewables and natural capital investments.

The Fund should focus on:

- supporting communities to acquire and invest in revenue generating assets creating long-term sustainable income for communities to invest in their own wellbeing
- building capacity for community asset ownership and business development

2.2.6 Community Benefit Payments & Community Right to Invest

Community benefit payments should be offered from all large-scale developments. A “community right to invest” should be introduced for all large-scale renewable developments, and developers should be required to offer investment stakes as part of their community benefit package.

2.2.7 Scottish National Investment Bank

The Scottish National Investment Bank (SNIB) should be directed to establish a specific fund targeted at providing accessible capital finance to support communities to acquire and develop assets to generate community wealth and resilience.

2.2.8 Additional powers

Additional powers are needed to:

- require land managers to reduce deer numbers to allow woodland regeneration
- require land managers to remediate peatland or exclude stock from peatland/areas at risk of erosion
- allow landowners to create crofting tenancies, including woodland crofts, outside the crofting counties

2.3 Diversifying Land Ownership and Access to Land Assets

The forthcoming Land Reform Bill should include a range of measures to reform and extend current mechanisms to support wider collective land ownership. This includes reform of existing legislation (2003 and 2016 Land Reform Acts and the 2015 Community Empowerment Act) to simplify procedures, harmonise requirements and increase accessibility.

2.3.1 Notice of intent to sell

There should be a requirement on owners of large-scale landholdings to give prior notice to community bodies of their intention to sell all or part of their landholding. The qualifying threshold for this requirement should be set at a relatively low level, with community bodies given the opportunity to register significant assets (i.e. based on local community importance as well as scale).

2.3.2 Harmonising Community Right to Buy and Asset Transfer Criteria

Legislative amendments to the 2003, 2015 and 2016 Acts are required to:

- allow Crofting Community Bodies to use other Rights to Buy and Asset Transfer (AT)
- allow AT-eligible bodies (including communities of interest) to use Community Rights to Buy (CRtB) where such acquisitions can be demonstrated to be in the public interest. Scottish Land Fund eligibility requirements should be likewise extended to support all bodies with AT/CRtB compliant constitutions.

2.3.3 Simplifying Community Rights to Buy

Community Right to Buy mechanisms should be made more accessible, e.g. by:

- streamlining the registration process by removing the requirement to identify an owner
- allowing community bodies to place registrations on all suitable land parcels
- simplifying the re-registration process
- extending the time period for exercising CRtB from 8 months to at least 12 months

2.3.4 Strengthening Community Asset Transfer

Community Asset Transfer legislation should be reviewed and amended as appropriate to ensure it is fit for purpose and fully incorporates CWB principles. The legislation should be strengthened to introduce greater accountability and sanctions for public authorities which fail to meet their obligations, and to limit the removal of public assets (e.g. by transferring them to arms-length bodies) from the scope of the legislation.

2.3.5 Extending Scope of Asset Transfer to other Collective Ownership Models

Mechanisms should be developed to support landownership (or lease) by other forms of collective ownership, such as co-operatives and social enterprises, with a wider range of membership structures, where such acquisitions can be demonstrated to be in the public interest.

2.3.6 Vacant and derelict land

Community Rights to Buy and Asset Transfer provisions should be reviewed to ensure they effectively facilitate and support communities to address the harm caused by vacant and derelict land. Support should include funding for community priority sites at a range of scales, and a mechanism for communities to force action on sites, and to purchase these where appropriate.

2.4 Deliver on Climate Change Plans

Without further action, Scotland will continue to miss annual targets set out in the current Climate Change Plan (in four out of the last five years, annual targets have been missed). A reliance on carbon capture and storage technologies which remain unproven and in any event are unlikely to be operational for some years yet, means that a renewed focus is required on energy efficiency measures and growing our capacity for renewable energy. The next Climate Change Plan must reflect credible policies that can be delivered on the ground without any reference or reliance on unproven technological fixes such as Negative Emissions Technologies.

2.5 Marine and Coastal Assets

Scotland's vast inshore marine area, extending out to 12 nautical miles, holds immense untapped potential for our communities. Currently, Crown Estate Scotland controls a significant portion of these vital resources, including the seabed and foreshore. We call for a more community-based approach to the ownership and management of these marine and coastal assets to foster a greater sense of ownership and responsibility among coastal communities for the marine and coastal areas they inhabit. This move towards community-based management not only enables sustainable practices but also nurtures the preservation of our marine environment for future generations. Part of that process should include enabling communities to take ownership of the foreshore in their localities as appropriate.

3. Local Economy

Scotland's economy must be decentralised, circular and designed to serve its citizens.

As noted in the introduction, community wealth building is a foundational component of a wellbeing economy. SCA contends that a major aspect of achieving our vision entails a culture change that enables the community sector, and by extension, communities themselves, to play a leading role in contributing to community wealth building, and the wider wellbeing economy of which it is part. A significant aspect of that culture change involves developing a genuinely partnership-based approach between public authorities and the community sector to secure shared outcomes that support the objectives of CWB and the wellbeing economy.

One critical dimension of that changing cultural and practical relationship between public authorities and the community sector relates to ensuring that the latter can fully engage in public procurement processes as appropriate. Similarly, it is vital that appropriate measures are put in place to support community-led business models resulting in local economic development that generates and retains wealth within communities.

There are also important strands of policy concerning locally produced food, and agriculture more generally, in terms of the relationship between communities and sustainable local economies. These range from the need for policy to facilitate and otherwise support community growing and hyper-local food production in our rural and urban communities, to shorter supply chains and sustainable crop production in the agriculture sector. CWB needs to be at the heart of the national and local food plans, as set out in the new Good Food Nation Act. Food partnerships need to be the key delivery mechanism for these plans to ensure that businesses of all types and sizes across Scotland, record, measure and improve their social and environmental impacts, and prioritise the needs of local communities and local economies.

Other important aspects of delivering a wellbeing economy, in which SCA has a particular interest, relate to tourism, and to community transport, in terms of their contributions to community wealth building within that wider wellbeing framework. SCA therefore calls for the following actions to be undertaken in support of community-led local economic development that reflect the above concerns.

3.1 Procurement

The Community Wealth Building Bill should include a range of measures to ensure that public sector procurement drives sustainability and supports CWB:

- CWB and sustainability must be prioritised above price in tender award criteria.
- The economic/social impact of spending should be prioritised over initial expenditure.
- Long term investment in local community businesses, social enterprises and third sector organisations must be prioritised over short-term spending;
- Public bodies must insist on and monitor transparent, genuine, and meaningful community benefits in any private sector contract.

These measures must apply to all public bodies, both local and national, rather than solely to local authorities.

3.2 Sustainable business models

A range of measures should be introduced to support local social enterprises, co-operatives and community-owned enterprises, with a focus on removing legal and institutional barriers to their effective functioning.

- Mainstream business support must be provided to promote social enterprise models when providing business support to start-ups, and established businesses.
- The recommendations of the Scottish Council for Development and Industry Business Purpose report must be fully supported and implemented.
- Incentives to consider a social enterprise model or local employee ownership should be provided to family businesses looking for inclusive and sustainable succession plans.
- Public sector spin-offs and ALEOs should be developed as local, employee-owned cooperatives and social enterprises.

3.3 Circular Economy

The forthcoming Circular Economy Bill contains a number of welcome proposals but stronger measures are required to prioritise reuse.

- We welcome the power to set circular economy targets in the bill. Preparation for reuse targets are needed to prioritise reuse alongside recycling.
- We welcome proposed restrictions on the disposal of unsold consumer goods but safeguards are necessary to ensure that the waste hierarchy (reuse over recycling) and social impacts are prioritised.
- The proposed statutory code of practice for recycling must be reviewed to ensure it fully prioritises reuse provision over recycling. The current co-design process set out in the forthcoming Route Map should review and improve the code of practice on this basis.

3.4 Food

The forthcoming Agriculture Bill must drive the transformation to a low carbon food economy, with more local production, processing, and retail. Less land must be used for growing crops for alcohol or to feed to animals, and much more for domestic fruit, vegetable and pulse production.

3.4.1 Community growing

There must be a substantial expansion in allotments and community growing facilities (see also 4.1.2 and 4.1.3 above) to ensure that every community can grow more of what it eats and eat more of what it grows.

3.4.2 Food partnerships

The Community Wealth Building Bill should include provisions for food partnerships in every local authority area, and for ensuring that CWB principles are used to guide development of Good Food Nation food plans.

3.4.3 Agricultural subsidy system

The new agricultural support framework should prioritise shorter supply chains, encourage co-operative models of working, and provide support for growing local markets. The market garden and glasshouse sectors should be supported to expand to supply local consumers with fruit and vegetables.

3.5 Tourism

Post-covid, tourism in Scotland must be recalibrated to focus primarily on providing benefits for our communities and local environment, adopting the principles set out in Scotland Outlook 2030 of 'responsible tourism for a sustainable future'. Recent legislation enables communities to innovate through asset transfers and social enterprise models, and the principles of community-led tourism are gaining significant traction. However, this needs strategic support. Tourism can directly help communities to be even better places to live, work, visit and invest when local tourism offerings are a shared endeavour between community and enterprise.

All tourism activity should be required to measure impact in relation to local priority issues, demonstrate clear community benefit and ambitious contributions to net zero with public sector grants and procurement being conditional on satisfying these requirements.

3.5.1 Tourist tax

The Scottish Government should work with communities and local authorities to introduce mechanisms that allow local funds to be raised from tourism activity, including, but not restricted to, parking charges, cruise ship berthing fees and event licensing. Revenues should then be retained within the respective geographic areas in which they are collected, and decisions on distributing the revenues should be made locally in partnership with communities, and in the service of community wealth building principles and community-led tourism.

3.6 Transport

The forthcoming Community Wealth Building Bill should include measures to support and expand community transport, which is increasingly plugging gaps in our transport system as Scotland's bus network shrinks and commercial bus operators withdraw rural, more frequent or unprofitable services. Accessible, affordable transport is essential for all communities to flourish, especially those facing poverty and inequality and/or threatened with depopulation which in particular affects our island communities. The need to resolve the longstanding and chronic problems affecting the ferry infrastructure that serves our islands must be given the highest priority by the Scottish Government if its ambitions for a wellbeing economy in all parts of the country are to be fulfilled.

Many older people, disabled people and households without access to a car rely on Community Transport. Community Transport connects local people and communities, tackles exclusion, isolation and loneliness and enables access to amenities, education, employment and healthcare. There is also a clear link between energy and transport and it is essential to move to low-carbon form of transport, whilst addressing the above needs.

3.6.1 Community transport commissioning

Community-led solutions in response to unmet local transport needs should be supported and prioritised in service commissioning processes, especially by local authorities and NHS bodies, in urban and rural contexts. Public procurement and tendering should focus on delivering community benefit and building community wealth.

3.6.2 New housing developments

Community-owned sustainable travel infrastructure and services should be built in to new housing developments. Developer contributions towards creating and funding new and existing community transport services – such as community buses, local neighbourhood car clubs and bike share or loan schemes – should be secured to ensure accessibility, promote sustainability and prevent car dependency. More generally, greater provision of active travel infrastructure is essential to enable people to access facilities they need by walking and cycling.

4. People

Scotland's most important resource is its people, who must be invested in and recognised as the key stakeholders and beneficiaries of the economy.

This means ensuring that people living in Scotland's rural and urban communities have access to the skills and jobs that will enable them to live fulfilling lives whilst simultaneously contributing to the sustainability of their local communities.

Public sector employment has long been an important driver of local economies, particularly in rural areas. The gradual loss of local offices and staff in pursuit of often illusory economies of scale has had significant impacts on the sustainability of affected communities. It is important to reverse that 'hollowing out' of the public sector's presence in many communities by actively seeking to (re)locate jobs within more geographically dispersed public sector anchor organisations where possible. There is also a continuing and vital local 'anchoring' role played by organisations such as Credit Unions that needs ongoing support.

In addition to its negative social and demographic impacts, the housing shortage is a major constraint on the economic development of rural Scotland. Whilst there may be some rural areas where there is an absolute shortage of housing and the only solution is to build more, the problem is greatly exacerbated by the increasing numbers of second homes and long-term empty properties, which push up prices and reduce the availability of permanent homes to local people.

More generally, the community sector has a vital role to play in contributing to the wellbeing of communities; both in terms of helping people to look after their physical and mental health in different ways, and through the provision of cultural services that are essential to the building of social capital that helps increase communities' resilience and capacity to thrive.

It is important to recognise that not all communities are equal in terms of resources and the spread of skills and capacity to exploit opportunities. Support for communities should be prioritised and invested in and can come from a range of organisations and sectors. Often some form of capacity building work is required that strengthens the leadership and ability of community organisations to define and achieve their objectives, initiate community activity and take control of some local assets and services.

A key aspect of community capacity and confidence building is the provision of opportunities for communities to learn from each other through exchanges and participation in collaborative projects. There are opportunities in the forthcoming Agriculture Bill to support this through the CLLD and Knowledge Transfer programmes, but there is also a more general support requirement for community-led and owned networks and learning exchanges.

SCA therefore calls for action in the following areas in support of people within Scotland's rural and urban communities.

4.1 Employment

4.1.1 Devolve employment law

The Scottish Government should pursue the devolution of further aspects of employment law to Scotland, where doing so would support community wealth building.

4.1.2 Decentralise public jobs

The Scottish Government, its agencies, and other public bodies, including local authorities, should halt and wherever possible reverse the process of centralisation of jobs in public bodies.

That should be complemented by a programme of relocating public sector jobs to fragile rural communities where possible.

4.1.3 Supporting local labour markets

The following measures should be introduced to help develop local labour markets:

- Targeted funding support for employing the young, local and/or unskilled, and those going back into the work force, including as part of the 'green skills' agenda.

- Directing more employability funding to community-based organisations and enterprises to develop work and 'social value' skills within communities.

4.1.4 Volunteering

There should be an increased recognition of and focus on the social value of volunteering to local economies, to help get people back to work and to contribute to CWB.

4.1.5 Fair Work

The Scottish Government's implementation of measures to support Fair Work practices must be delivered proportionately, and with appropriate funding and other support, across all sectors, without disadvantaging small and community-based employers.

4.2 Skills

Investment in appropriate skills is crucial for the development of the sustainable Scotland we want to see. Education and training provision must be developed with community input to deliver the relevant skills required to fill local skills gaps and training needs.

4.2.1 Learning access and progression routes

There is a need to help support local economies and people to increase capacity and skills through learning. That includes:

- Recognition across curricula of the value of volunteering and the role of the social economy and community-based organisations in delivering positive social, environmental and economic impacts.
- Measures to ensure learning opportunities in the rural economy, and contextualisation of learning opportunities, including apprenticeship frameworks. Such opportunities must value environmental sustainability and reflect the diversity and nuance associated with Scotland's local economies.
- Targeted funding support for modern and graduate apprenticeships that fits with the needs of a local context, including business management from a community and sustainability perspective.
- Enabling more academic partnerships with community-based organisations and enterprises to increase academic understanding and practical impact to support sustainable development within Scotland and elsewhere.

4.2.2 Agriculture and land management

Support for Skills, Knowledge Transfer and Innovation should cover all land management sectors, not just agriculture.

All farmers and new entrants should have access to appropriate training and development opportunities and all agricultural workers should be paid at least the real Living Wage.

4.2.3 Credit Unions

Scotland's Credit Unions perform a vital role in retaining and circulating money within local economies by providing straightforward and ethical means for saving and borrowing.

They should be further supported by:

- Development of a 'Volunteering Toolkit' to help Credit Unions to recruit, train, retain and reward the right types of capable and competent volunteers.

4.3 Affordable Housing

The chronic lack of affordable housing for rent or purchase is the single most important issue for many rural and urban communities. A raft of measures is needed to address this:

- Holiday houses must be seen as a separate use class, with local authorities given the power to classify homes as primary residences, second homes or holiday lets.
- An owner should need planning permission to change a property's classification from a primary residence to a second home.

4.4 Culture

The communities we belong to, live, work, play and grow old in are the primary source of our physical and mental health, which affects the kind of life we are able to live. Everyone should have the right to access creative activities in their own communities where creativity is nurtured, and innovation, resilience and belonging can flourish.

The Scottish Government's Culture Strategy attempts to widen the idea of culture beyond what are generally recognised as 'the arts' to include 'the everyday and the emerging'. Decision makers must acknowledge that creativity extends beyond the boundaries of the professional and publicly funded arts sector and recognise the distinctiveness of everyday culture, its diversity and scale. Local cultures and their role in place-making and community identity are an important factor in community empowerment.

The following measures would enhance and broaden support for cultural activity in Scotland:

- Over time, 1% of the Scottish Government budget should be allocated to culture, up from its current level of 0.58%. There needs to be a clearer understanding of the respective roles of national and local government funding for community-based everyday culture.
- The successful Culture Collective programme should become mainstreamed into the sector's funding.
- Volunteers are key to the sustainability of grassroots cultural activity and there needs to be greater recognition that volunteering is time and resource intensive support for voluntary arts, both in terms of capacity building for volunteers and regular micro-grant funding for voluntary groups. A micro-grants scheme should be formalised and embedded within the cultural budget for allocation at the local level.

- Development of accredited learning opportunities for Credit Union personnel, leading to improvements in operational practice and organisational governance.
- Adjustment of the Modern Apprenticeship Schemes to attract a younger generation of people into the Credit Union sector, to complement existing experience within the sector.

- Licensing authorities should have the power to include an Overprovision Policy within the current licensing regime for holiday lets.
- Local authorities should be given powers to increase Council Tax rates for second homes or apply to increase Land and Buildings Transaction Tax in specific areas to dampen prices.

4.3.1 Community-led housing providers

More support should be given to Scotland's small, community-led housing providers to both continue and expand their vital role in affordable social housing provision in our rural and urban places.

- A voice representing the cultural sector should be heard at all levels within the Community Planning Partnership structures.
- Local Place Plans enable communities to make their views heard on spaces for culture, including existing cultural assets, and therefore Local Place Plans and Local Development Plans should have regard to the culture and creativity policies in National Planning Framework 4.
- Community assets are an essential part of the local infrastructure for sustaining cultural activity in communities, and for delivering a place-based approach. For culture to thrive within communities, there must be spaces in which cultural activities can take place.
- There should be a national capital programme to support the refurbishment, retrofitting and upkeep of assets that are used for cultural activity.
- The Scottish Government should work with the UK Government towards signing the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which could give protected status to local cultural traditions identified by communities.

4.5 Health

Healthy and thriving communities are central to the aims of community wealth building and the wider wellbeing economy. Scottish Communities For Health and Wellbeing has produced a Blueprint for a Healthier Scotland⁶ with detailed proposals as to how the Scottish Government could generate the investment necessary to support community-led approaches to improving health and well-being.

- A national framework for social prescribing should be established.
- The Community Wellbeing Exchange (CWE) model should be supported and extended.

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