

Agenda Item	11a
Report No	HP/29/25

The Highland Council

Committee: Housing and Property

Date: 13 August 2025

Report Title: Annual Community Asset Transfer Report 2024/25

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The Community Empowerment Act introduces a right for community bodies to request to own, lease or use public sector assets at a discount on market value through a process known as Community Asset Transfer (CAT). Community ownership of assets has an important role in supporting people to create local opportunities and transform their communities, responding to local challenges by taking control of land and buildings where they live. It is therefore a key priority for the Council to support greater community ownership.

1.2 The Act places a requirement on relevant authorities, including local authorities, to publish an annual report on community asset transfer activity for each financial year for the Scottish Government. Key messages for 2024/25 include:-

- **Two** new requests received during 2024/25 were determined (agreed);
- **Three** new requests received during 2024/25 and are yet to be determined;
- **Five** requests received in previous years were determined (agreed) in 2024/25; and
- Since the asset transfer legislation came into force in 2017, the Council has transferred **34 assets** and approved over 50 requests (this reflects approvals for which conveyancing is ongoing).

1.3 This report summarises community asset transfer activity in Highland during 2024/25 and the annual community asset transfer report for submission to the Scottish Government can be found in **Appendix 1**.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to **consider and agree** the annual report on Community Asset Transfer as detailed in the report and at **Appendix 1** for submission to the Scottish Government.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** - the report outlines that the total value of discount on assets legally agreed for transfer during 2024/25 was £294,000 in capital value and £12,761 p/a in market rental value; this highlights the strong support the Council continues to demonstrate for enabling and encouraging community ownership.
- 3.2 **Legal** - Community Asset Transfer (CAT) is a legislative process set out in the Community Empowerment Act. Public bodies have the right to refuse a CAT application on the grounds that greater community benefit will arise from current or alternative use; however, community bodies have the right of review; first to the public body and then to appeal to Scottish Ministers.
- 3.3 **Risk** - A key consideration in the assessment of any asset transfer is the sustainability of the proposal; this is both to protect the public asset and ensure ongoing benefit to the community from effective use of the asset. There are, however, risks that any group could fail in the future or choose to dispose of the transferred asset. Economic development burdens and, at times, rights of pre-emption contained within the terms of transfers of ownership, helps protect the Council and public money against this. Any clauses are considered on a case-by-case basis. In addition, the Community Empowerment Act provides a clause which stipulates how dissolution must be dealt with to ensure any transferred asset remains in community hands, for the benefit of the community, in the event of an organisation ceasing to exist.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety** - There are no specific health and safety implications as a result of the report.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** - There are no specific Gaelic implications as a result of the report.

4 Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is an annual monitoring report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 Background

- 5.1 The Community Empowerment Act introduces a right for community bodies to request to own, lease or use public sector assets at a discount on market value through a process known as Community Asset Transfer (CAT); this mechanism came into force in January 2017. Once a completed request is submitted from an eligible community group, the Empowerment Act stipulates that Local Authorities have six months to assess the application against a range of potential community benefits and determine whether to grant the request.
- 5.2 Community ownership of assets has an important role in supporting people to create local opportunities and transform their communities, responding to local challenges by taking control of land and buildings where they live. It can also support bringing surplus or underutilised assets back into improved use, for the benefit of the community; it is, therefore, a key priority for the Council to support greater community ownership.
- 5.3 In Highland, one of the Council's key priorities over many years has been to support communities to develop their own capacity and deliver their own priorities; the CAT programme contributes towards this. The CAT process in Highland continues to support community-led regeneration, social enterprise, projects to increase local participation and engagement, health and wellbeing, redeveloped facilities and delivery of new and improved local services, including visitor management facilities. Since the asset transfer legislation came into force in 2017, the Council has transferred 34 assets and supported over 50 requests
- 5.4 The Community Empowerment Act places a requirement on relevant authorities including local authorities to publish an annual report on community asset transfer activity for each financial year and to submit this to the Scottish Government. The draft report is attached within **Appendix 1** and Members are asked to consider and agree this for submission to the Scottish Government.

6 Scottish Government Annual Community Asset Transfer Report

6.1 The report in **Appendix 1** contains a detailed picture of Community Asset Transfer activity in Highland during April 2024 to March 2025.

6.2 The report highlights:-

The Council received a total of **five** new asset transfer requests in 2024/25:-

- All were requests to be considered under the Community Empowerment Act
- **Three** of the requests were for ownership and **two** for lease of land or buildings

The Council agreed to **seven** asset transfer requests (two from applications submitted in 2024/25 and five submitted in previous years) and refused **zero** requests during the year 2024/25. Two were for leases and five for ownership. Discounts given across CATs ranged from 30% to 100% of the asset's market value.

The seven transfers agreed in 2024/25 were:-

- Fort William Men's Shed, discounting their lease of an industrial unit to ensure economic viability of the Shed;
- Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge and Achnacarry SCIO for ownership of a park and riverside walk to develop a community garden with allotments and open amenity space;
- The Place Youth Club discounting their lease of a vacant industrial lot in Alness to ensure economic viability of ongoing use;
- Elphin, Ledmore & Knockan Community Association for ownership of Elphin Hall to improve facilities (toilets, heating, energy efficiency);
- Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Community Company for ownership of the Memorial Hall to improve the facility for continued community use;
- Raddery House Limited for ownership of the former Black Isle Education Centre and Raddery Woodland to develop the site for community use; and
- Balvonie Park Association for ownership of land to create a community woodland and orchard.

The two transfers legally concluded in 2024/25 were:-

- Fort William Men's Shed – to ensure the economic viability of the Shed.
- Balvonie Park Association – to create a community woodland and orchard.

6.3 Fifteen asset transfers agreed prior to 2024/25 had not yet been concluded legally as at 31 March 2025. The legal process is often complex and whilst the transfer has been agreed, terms must be agreed between legal teams representing the Council and community group. This is reflected in the number of requests waiting to be concluded.

- 6.4 The purpose of Community Asset Transfer within community empowerment legislation is to enhance and increase community benefit outcomes in local communities through improved use of publicly owned assets; this can involve public bodies foregoing some or all financial value of assets to support delivery of the community benefit arising from transfer (awarding discounts on market value or market rental value). The **seven** asset transfers agreed in 2024/25 present a positive picture of the Council supporting communities and agreeing to transfer ownership of land and buildings to a community organisation to deliver wider benefits to the local community. For each, it was assessed that the level of wider community benefit that would be derived as a result of the transfers significantly outweighed the Council retaining ownership and use of the assets.
- 6.5 The Council continues to support groups who wish to consider the ownership, lease or use of an asset under the Community Empowerment Act legislation. Community Support Officers within the Community Support and Engagement team have a specific role to support community groups to develop their proposals in relation to any CAT, providing advice, guidance and, where required, signposting to specialist advice through the Community Ownership Support Service run by the Development Trusts Association.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive – Place

Date: 7 July 2025

Author: Ewen McIntosh, Community Support Officer

Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1: Scottish Government Annual Community Asset Transfer Report

**Asset Transfer Request
Reporting Template 2024/25 for Relevant Authorities**

Section 95 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires relevant authorities to produce an annual report on Asset Transfer Request activity and publish this no later than 30 June each year.

Following stakeholder feedback and in response to asset transfer evaluations, this template has been created to help gather asset transfer data for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. Information provided will help inform policy and practice at local and national level as the data will be collated and shared by the Scottish Government's Community Empowerment Team. However, it will be for each relevant authority to make their own annual report publicly available by 30 June 2025, whether using this template or not.

Please provide information in sections below and email completed template by 30 June 2025 to community.empowerment@gov.scot

Section One – Relevant Authority Information

Organisation:	Highland Council	Address:	Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX
Completed by:	Ewen McIntosh	Role:	Community Support Officer
Email:	Ewen.McIntosh@highland.gov.uk		
Date of completion:	04.07.2024		
Are you the Asset Transfer Lead Contact for the organisation:	No		
If not please provide the name, job title and email address for the lead contact for any queries:			
Dot Ferguson	Senior Community Development Manager		
dot.ferguson@highland.gov.uk	01397 707253		

Appendix 1**Section 2: Asset Transfer Data in 2024/25**

2.1 Please complete the following table for the 2024/25 reporting period:

Total Applications Received	Number of successful applications determined	Number of unsuccessful applications determined	Number received and yet to be determined	Number received prior to 2024/25 and yet to be determined
5	7	0	3	0

2.2 Please provide details of Asset Transfer Requests received which resulted in transfer of ownership, lease, or rights from your relevant authority to a community transfer body in 2024/25:

Key:

Requests received during the year and transfer agreed during 2024/25 - highlighted green	2
Requests received during the year and not yet determined during 2024/25 - highlighted blue	3
Request received in previous years but agreed in 2024/25 - highlighted orange	5
Requests agreed prior to 2024/25, but where the legal process had not yet been agreed/concluded in 2024/25 - highlighted yellow	15
Requests agreed prior to 2024/25, subsequently legally completed during 2024/25	NONE
Requests received in previous years but not yet decided	NONE

Appendix 1

Community Transfer Body	Request Accepted	Decision Agreed	Transfer Completed	Description of asset	Amount Paid	Discount Given	Discount Agreed/ Sought	Type of Transfer	Purpose of Transfer
Portree and Braes Community Trust	10/01/2025			Old Swimming Pool Site, near Camanachd square Portree			£2000 (100%) sought	Ownership	Develop an adventure playground
Fort William Men's Shed	20/12/2024	27/01/2025	02/07/2025	Unit 9A2 Blar Mhor Industrial Estate, Fort William	£2,861	£2,861	50% agreed; 100% sought.	5 year lease	Economic sustainability of established Men's Shed
Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge and Achnacarry SCIO	11/12/2024	27/01/2025		Park and wooded riverside walk adjacent to Spean Bridge Community Centre	£1	£25,000	100%	Ownership	Community Garden with allotments, polytunnel, sensory garden, open amenity space and a riverside walk
Pentland United SCIO	13/09/2024			Land adjacent to entrance to Ham Park, Dunnet			100%	Ownership	Relocate entrance to enable redevelopment
Dunbeath & Berriedale Development Trust	27/08/2024			Playing Fields near Campbell Avenue, Dunbeath.			100%	30 year lease	Drainage improvement
The Place Youth Club	21/02/2024	05/09/2024		Site 4, River Drive, Teaninich Industrial Estate Alness	£1	£9900 pa	100%	99 year lease	Economic sustainability of current use
Carrbridge Ahead	04/09/2023	30/11/2023		Parcel of land next to Community Fire Station, Carrbridge	£1	£1,999	100%	Ownership	Community Orchard
Elphin, Ledmore & Knockan Community Association	01/07/2023	04/02/2025		Elphin Hall (Former Assynt Primary School)	£1	£115,000	100%	Ownership	Improvement of facilities (toilets, heating, energy efficiency)

Appendix 1

Community Transfer Body	Request Accepted	Decision Agreed	Transfer Completed	Description of asset	Amount Paid	Discount Given	Discount Agreed/ Sought	Type of Transfer	Purpose of Transfer
Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Community Company	29/03/2023	05/09/2024		Memorial Hall, Oich Road, Fort Augustus	£40,000	£40,000	100%	Ownership	Maintain and improve memorial hall for community use
Raddery House Limited	03/03/2023	29/01/2025		Former Black Isle Education Centre and Raddery Woodland	£325,000	£140,000	30%	Ownership	Develop the site for community activities
Thrumster Community Development Association	30/11/2022	29/05/2023		Thrumster Swing Park	£1	£24,999	100%	Ownership	Building of a new village hall
Waternish Community Garden	29/11/2022	29/03/2023		Land at rear of Waternish Hall	£10 pa	£90 pa	90%	5 year Lease	Community Garden
Balvonie Park Association	18/11/2022	07/06/2024	09/04/2025	Land adjacent to Braes of Balvonie	£1	£300,000	100%	Ownership	Create a community woodland/orchard
Melvich Community SCIO	15/11/2022	30/11/2023		Portskerra Play Park	£1	£3500	100%	Ownership	Ownership of play park
Muir of Ord Development Trust	25/08/2022	15/12/2022		Land at southern end of Ord Industrial Estate	£1	£2074 pa	100%	20 year lease	Development of a Men's Shed
Melvich Community SCIO	04/07/2022	23/8/2023		Melvich public toilets	£1	£5,000	100%	Ownership	Demolition & replacement
St Fergus Bowling Club	19/11/2021	29/05/2023		Garage site at Loch Street	£1	£19,999	100%	Ownership	Develop indoor bowling facilities
Dunbeath & District Centre	06/10/2021	30/03/2022	Deferred to 2027 (for funding)	Land south west of Neil Gunn Road	£1	£99,999	100%	Ownership	Developing a new health and wellbeing centre

Appendix 1

Community Transfer Body	Request Accepted	Decision Agreed	Transfer Completed	Description of asset	Amount Paid	Discount Given	Discount Agreed/ Sought	Type of Transfer	Purpose of Transfer
Lochaber Rugby Club	30/06/2021	18/12/2023		Rugby Pitch	£1	£105,000	100%	Ownership	Expanded public use of pitch
Road to the Isle Facilities Group	26/03/2021	20/10/2021		Tougal Car Park and Toilets	Nil	£1 pa	100%	25 year lease	Improve and extend parking
Raasay Development Trust	21/03/2021	30/08/2021		Raasay New Ferry Terminal	£1	£1550 pa	100%	99 year lease	Redevelopment as a part of community pontoon project
Grantown Initiative	27/11/2020	23/03/2022		Burnfield Public Toilets	£1	£7,000	100%	Ownership	Reinstate the public conveniences
Ormlie Community Association ltd	16/02/2019	27/08/2019		Ormlie Community Centre	£1	£9,000	100%	25 year lease	Security of tenure to sustain and expand community facility
Helmsdale and District Development Trust	18/09/2018	16/02/2019	04/07/2025	Coupers yard	Nil	£30,000	100%	Ownership	Development of small industrial spaces; campervan 'aire'; glamping pods
Strathnaver Museum	01/03/2018	12/06/2019		Bettyhill Visitor Centre	£1	£70,000	100%	Ownership	Development of café for museum visitors

Appendix 1

2.3 Please provide details of Asset Transfer Requests that went to a relevant authority appeal or review which were concluded in 2024/25: Nil

Name of Community Transfer Body	Was the Asset Transfer Appeal/Review accepted? (Y/N)	Why was the Appeal/Review accepted/refused? <i>Please provide details of the asset transfer request and reasons for your decision.</i>
N/A		

2.4 Please use this space to provide any further comments relating to the above data:

Please see the report that accompanied this annual report, considered at the Housing and Property Committee on 13 August 2025 – [weblink](#)

Section Three – Promotion and Equality

3.1 Please provide information on any action you have taken to promote the benefits of asset transfer or any support provided for communities to engage with the Asset Transfer Request process.

Highland Council continues to proactively work with local communities to ensure that among options they may wish to consider, Community Asset Transfer is supported and enabled where they deem it appropriate to their own requirements and for a purpose they can evidence is both sustainable and strongly supported by the community.

During 2024/25 the restructure of the Community Support and Engagement team further embedded duties for asset transfer within the roles of the team, ensuring there is resource to support the development of CATs with groups and to deliver at the assessment stage of the CAT process. These changes have allowed the Council to link more closely and effectively with its communities than was previously possible and it is anticipated this will lead to more development activity involving communities with the Council's services and properties.

The Council has committed to producing (or supporting others to produce) Area Place Plans for each Committee area in Highland. As part of this process, communities have been encouraged to think about CATs as a possible mechanism to deliver on priorities identified through the APP process.

3.2 In particular, what action has been taken to support disadvantaged communities to engage with the asset transfer process?

As there is a demonstrable link with Community Planning, the Area Place Plan process and team restructure mentioned at 3.1 will particularly help us to target areas of inequality, freeing up resource to allow us to provide more support to any community (whether geographic or sectoral) which may express an interest in CAT. It is anticipated that this place-based approach may increase interest in CAT.

Section Four – Additional Information

4.1 Please use this space to provide any further feedback not covered in the above sections.

NA

Please email the completed template by 30 June 2025 to community.empowerment@gov.scot

If you have any queries please contact Malcolm Cowie, Asset Transfer Policy Manager at Malcolm.cowie@gov.scot