

Agenda Item	5
Report No	WRSL/03/26

**Committee:** **Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh**

**Date:** **19 January 2026**

**Report Title:** **Community Asset Transfer Request – Torridon Playpark**

**Report By:** **Assistant Chief Executive - Place**

## **1 Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act introduces a right for community bodies to request to own, lease or use public sector assets through a process known as Community Asset Transfer. As part of this request a discount on market value can be requested. Once a formal request is submitted, Local Authorities have 6 months to assess the application against a range of potential community benefits and determine whether to grant the request.
- 1.2 Where Council assets are over the value of £10,000 and below £100,000, decision on the transfer of any asset rests with the Area Committees. This report asks Members to consider and agree the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) request received from Torridon District Community Association (TDCA).

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked to **agree** to the sale of the land of the former Torridon Playpark, Torridon, to Torridon District Community Association for £1, based upon the terms of transfer as set out in the report at 6.1.

## **3 Implications**

- 3.1 **Resource** - TDCA are requesting effectively a 100% discount on the market value of the Asset, which is estimated at £20,000.

The CAT Asset Management Board including representatives from Legal, Finance, Property and Communities and Place have considered and scrutinised the CAT request and supporting evidence. The request is recommended to proceed as the wider community benefits would outweigh the benefit from the Council retaining the Assets.

- 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 by appeal to Scottish Ministers.
- 3.3 **Risk** - Although any CAT assessment considers sustainability, there are risks that any group could fail in the future or choose to dispose of the transferred asset. 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 (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - There are not considered to be any implications associated with this transfer.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** - There are not considered to be any implications associated with this transfer.

## **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 **Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary**
  - 4.3.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken on the CAT for the former Torridon Playpark. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.
  - 4.3.2 The Screening process has concluded that as there are no identified negative impacts, a full impact assessment is not required. Members are asked to consider the summary in **Appendix 1** to support the decision-making process.

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4.3.3	<b>Impact Assessment Area</b>	<b>Conclusion of Screening</b>
	Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and Young People – Positive</li> <li>• Children affected by disability – Positive</li> <li>• Older adults – <i>No impact</i></li> </ul>
	Socio-economic	<i>Positive</i>
	Human Rights	<i>No impact</i>
	Children's Rights and Well-being	<i>Positive</i>
	Island and Mainland Rural	<i>No impact</i>
	Climate Change	<i>No impact</i>
	Data Rights	<i>No impact</i>

## 5 Overall Summary

5.1 Torridon District Community Association (TDCA) is a Scottish Charity established in 1972 and constituted in its present form in 2008, it is working towards delivering projects that will address the priorities identified in the Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Development Plan 2023-28. The Group currently has seven volunteer Directors and 40 members.

A key project in the development plan is the repurposing of Torridon Primary School and former playpark. The school was mothballed for thirteen years and a formal decision to close the school was taken in 2023, with the playpark equipment removed by Highland Council in 2018.

The TDCA subgroup that is responsible for project delivery commissioned an options appraisal and business plan from SKS Scotland and JGA Architects to support TDCA's decision making regarding the school and playpark. Working closely with the subgroup, SKS produced a document to articulate options for redevelopment, provide research on markets and income streams, assess risk, and clarify the potential for a sustainable business model to be developed.

This CAT request is only for the former playpark and associated ground, not the Primary School building.

5.2 TDCA plan to reinstate a playpark on the site which previously had play equipment when the school was in operation and for several years afterwards.

The new playpark will be a much-needed facility for children who live in the settlements in the Torridon area as well as for children from the neighbouring areas of Kinlochewe and Shieldaig. TDCA aim to design the playpark to be usable by a broad range of ages and will explore options, including some equipment usable by adults.

Currently there are no play facilities in the village which reduces the opportunities for children in the Torridon area to develop closer links with children they attend school with in Shieldaig and Gairloch. The nearest playpark for local children is in Shieldaig which is a 14-mile round trip from Torridon with no regular public transport, meaning parents must have access to private transport to be able to take their children to a playpark.

Reinstating the playpark will allow children to play safely in a location in the centre of the village. It will also allow parents to meet and connect with other local parents and will allow children and parents alike to benefit from being outdoors.

5.3 TDCA has previously delivered a complex community asset project by successfully fundraising and building the Community Centre, which was opened in 2012. The relevant experience and knowledge that was developed through that project will benefit current TDCA Board members, who possess a wide range of skills that will be beneficial when developing and delivering this new project. These skills are augmented by the TDCA subgroup, formed specifically to take this project forward, and which includes people with professional legal, financial and project management skills and experience. The playpark subgroup will sit under the TDCA Board. Skills in fundraising, community engagement, and project development and delivery have been identified as essential within this group.

TDCA employs a development officer to support the Board with taking forward identified priorities in the development plan, including this project. This post holder started at the end of April 2024 and undertakes day-to-day work associated with the project. A project management post may also be recruited at a later stage, to support the implementation of the project, if funding allows.

The group's volunteer hours totalled 1,903 in the last year, when accounting for director hours, social media, various sub-groups, Celtman, fundraising, events etc. The actual number of volunteers over that period totalled 40 with a population of about 150, this is equivalent to 26% of the resident population.

5.4 Initial estimated figures from 3 playpark companies have indicated that the playpark could cost up to £80,000. Given the current grant funding landscape is challenging, TDCA are exploring a phased approach to the installation of the new playpark. The group have a track record of raising funds for local projects including the Torridon Community Centre.

Potential funding sources have been identified by the group including the Highland Council CRF and Play Park Funds, Silverhill Trust, Scottish Sea Farms, National Lottery Awards for All, Garfield Weston, FCC Scotland Action Fund, Asda Foundation, and local fundraising.

5.5 The Board Directors are all local to the community and have a variety of professional backgrounds and disciplines, and the group's willingness to obtain professional input is well evidenced in their CAT application and supporting documentation.

## 6 Recommendation

6.1 Sale of the Assets comprising the land of the former Torridon Playpark, Torridon, to Torridon District Community Association for £1. Terms of the transfer as follows:-

- TDCA will cover all reasonably incurred property and legal costs associated with the asset transfer process – both the Council's and its own.
- Community access to use of the facility must be maintained in line with the Community Empowerment Act.
- Any transfer will be subject to existing burdens/conditions in the Council's title to the property (e.g., third party access rights, etc.).
- The Council will only transfer property for which it has title to do so.

Any other terms to be agreed by the Chief Officer, Housing and Communities in consultation with the Chair of Housing and Property Committee.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 16 December 2025

Author: Willie MacKinnon - Community Development Manager

Background Papers: Torridon Development Community Association Business Plan  
Torridon Primary School Business Plan V16 [Final](#)  
Torridon Playpark – Appendix 1 Stakeholder Consultations & Community [Engagements](#)  
Torridon Playpark – Appendix 4 Long List of Options [FINAL](#)

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment  
Appendix 2 – Community Asset Transfer Approach Assessment Framework – TDCA

**Integrated Impact Assessment – Summary**

The screening highlighted overall positive impacts for the community, mainly, for children and young people.

The proposal will provide an opportunity for young people to learn how to play together and integrate with their peers, providing health, physical, social impacts that support their development and provides access to a facility that is not reliant on public transport and reintroduces a service that had previously been withdrawn.

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL****Community Asset Transfer Approach****Assessment Framework****Purpose**

The purpose of the assessment is to ensure that the decision-making process will produce the best decision for the community, not necessarily Highland Council nor the requesting Community Asset Transfer Body.

**Evidence**

Primarily the assessment will be based on the information received within the application form and any business plan however additional representations from external parties will also be included along with internal service knowledge.

Cognisance will be taken regarding the nature of the request e.g. whether it is for lease, use or ownership. The level of assurance required will differ depending upon the nature of the request with higher level of compliance/support required for organisations wishing transfer of an asset as opposed to a leasing arrangement.

**Structure of Assessment**

The assessment will be structured under 5 key headings.

- Benefit to the community (outcomes)
- Capacity to deliver
- Level of community support
- Sustainability
- Resourcing

Consideration will also be given to the terms and conditions requested by the Community Asset Transfer Body and what equivalent terms may be appropriate.

Each of the 5 assessment areas will be assessed separately, considering evidence of best value and be given an overall rating from very strong to poor. A summary of the evidence required to achieve each rating is outlined below:

Evidence	Overview
Very strong	Governance and financial arrangements are strong and sustainable. Best value characteristics are evidenced and contained throughout the approach. Related projected benefits are very robust and demonstrate value for money.
Strong	Governance and financial arrangements are sound and sustainable. Best value characteristics are in evidence in the proposal. Related projected benefits are demonstrated well and represent value for money.
Moderate	Governance and financial arrangements are in place and acceptable. Best value characteristics have been considered as part of the proposal. Related projected benefits are acceptable and could lead to value for money.
Weak	Governance and financial arrangements are weak. Best value characteristics are not well demonstrated in the proposal. Related projected benefits are not based on robust information and demonstrates questionable value for money.
Poor	Governance and financial arrangements are poor. There is little evidence of Best Value characteristics in the proposal. Related projected benefits are ill defined and/or unrealistic and do not demonstrate value for money.

## Torridon Play Park Land



ASSESSMENT AREA:	BENEFIT TO THE COMMUNITY		
Criteria	<i>Evidence from Community Asset Transfer Body</i>	<i>Additional Evidence/Information</i>	<i>Assessment of Compliance</i>
Economic benefits	The playpark will contribute to local economic development by encouraging visitors, particularly families, to stop in the village for longer periods. As a result, local businesses are likely to experience increased footfall.		Moderate

Regeneration benefits	The proposed playpark will transform this space into a vibrant and functional area for the community. The project will bring a scarcely used piece of land into community ownership and provide a valuable amenity for local families.		Moderate
Health benefits	The playpark will encourage children to engage in active play, which promotes physical fitness and overall wellbeing. Adult-friendly equipment will also be explored to encourage intergenerational use thereby giving everyone the opportunity to improve their physical and mental health.		Strong
Social wellbeing benefits	The Play Park will strengthen children's connection to their community and the place that they live. It will provide a social hub where parents can connect with one another, fostering a stronger sense of community.		Strong
Environmental Benefits	The project will incorporate planting to enhance biodiversity, replacing the current mown grass with a more ecologically diverse landscape.		Moderate

Tackling inequality	The current nearest playpark is located in Shieldaig, which requires a minimum 14-mile round trip and is very difficult to access without private transport.		Moderate
Promotion of equality	The playpark will be designed to be inclusive and accessible to all members of the community. By ensuring that the park meets accessibility standards and serves people of all ages and abilities, the project will promote inclusivity and equal opportunities for outdoor recreation.		Moderate
Any other benefits detailed			
<b>Benefit to the Community Assessment Summary:</b>		<i>Rating – Moderate</i>	

ASSESSMENT AREA:	CAPACIY TO DELIVER		
Criteria	<i>Evidence from Community Asset Transfer Body</i>	<i>Additional Evidence/Information</i>	<i>Assessment of Compliance</i>
Experience of organisation	<p>TDCA has previously fundraised and delivered a largescale capital project in the form of the Loch Torridon Community Centre which was built in 2012. They have successfully operated and maintained this facility since then. It is located just a five-minute walk from the proposed playpark site. TDCA staff and board members are all local residents who are familiar with the area and well-placed to provide additional support for the upkeep and oversight of the playpark as needed.</p>		Strong
Access to appropriate advice and support	<p>SKS Scotland was employed to write a feasibility study and business plan for a combined Torridon School and Playpark project which has helped to identify possible funding sources.</p>	<p>SKS offers bespoke support for individuals, community groups, social enterprises and charities whose projects aim to make a positive impact, locally or nationally.</p>	Strong

Have sought advice and support during application phase	TDCA has received advice from Highlands and Islands Enterprise regarding the Community Asset Transfer process and will have ongoing support from them through any Scottish Land Fund application.	A playpark equipment company will be used for the design of the playpark, and the installation will be done by professional contractors.  Advice sought from the Council's Amenity Team to deal with Play Parks Highland wide.	Strong
Appropriate skills within the organisation	TDCA has previously delivered a complex community asset project by successfully fundraising and building the Community Centre, which was opened in 2012. This relevant experience and knowledge will benefit the current TDCA Board members, who possess a wide range of skills. These skills are augmented by the TDCA subgroup, formed specifically to carry the project forward, and which includes people with professional legal, financial and project management skills and experience.	The Playpark subgroup for this project will sit under the TDCA Board, who have identified skills in fundraising, community engagement, and project development and delivery as essential for this group.  TDCA has a development officer to support this project.	Strong
Access and level of volunteer support	TDCA has a Board of 7 volunteer Directors, and membership of 40, with a track record of wider community volunteers. Craft Workshops, Strupag and Scottish Country Dancing.	A total of 1903 volunteer hours from 40 volunteers (26% of the resident population) over the past year.	Strong

<b>Capacity to Deliver Assessment Summary:</b>	<i>Rating – Strong</i>
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<b>ASSESSMENT AREA</b>	<b>LEVEL OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT</b>		
<b>Criteria</b>	<b><i>Evidence from Community Asset Transfer Body</i></b>	<b><i>Additional Evidence/Information</i></b>	<b><i>Assessment of Compliance</i></b>
Community involvement in developing the request	<p>In 2023, Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council, along with partner organisations including TDCA, Kinlochewe Village Hall, Community Out West Trust, and National Trust for Scotland, completed a Community Development Plan. This plan was created following an extensive period of community consultation involving residents from across the area, Extensive community consultation was carried out by the action group formed under Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council (TKCC) to inform the Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Development Plan 2023-2028, with nearly 50% of the population (around 170 people) responding to the initial survey.</p>	<p>Discussions with key stakeholders were carried out and several community workshops were held in Torridon in November 2023 by SKS, with an estimated 50 people attending over the three main events.</p> <p>The Community Development Plan is listed in the Area Place Plan.</p>	Strong

Community support for the request	Further consultation was carried out by SKS Scotland as part of a feasibility study, and the reinstatement of a playpark was identified as the single most supported proposal.		Strong
<b>Level of Community Support Assessment Summary:</b>		<i>Rating – Strong</i>	

<b>ASSESSMENT AREA:</b>	<b>SUSTAINABILITY</b>		
<b>Criteria</b>	<b><i>Evidence from Community Asset Transfer Body</i></b>	<b><i>Additional Evidence/Information</i></b>	<b><i>Assessment of Compliance</i></b>
Financial – ability to support/fund the asset in the future	Initial estimated figures from 3 playpark companies have indicated that the playpark could cost up to £80,000. Given the current grant funding landscape is challenging, TDCA are exploring a phased approach to the installation of the new playpark.	Funding sources identified include Highland Council CRF and Play Park Funds, Silverhill Trust, Scottish Sea Farms, National Lottery Awards for All, Garfield Weston, FCC Scotland Action Fund. Asda Foundation, local fundraising	Moderate
Governance – sustainability of the organisation	TDCA is a Scottish Charity established in 1972 and constituted in its present form in 2008, it is working towards delivering projects that will address the priorities identified in the Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Development Plan 2023-28.		Strong

<b>Sustainability Assessment Summary:</b>	<i>Rating – Strong/Moderate</i>
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<b>ASSESSMENT AREA</b>	<b>RESOURCING</b>		
<b>Criteria</b>	<b><i>Evidence from Community Asset Transfer Body</i></b>	<b><i>Additional Evidence/Information</i></b>	<b><i>Assessment of Compliance</i></b>
Value of asset	Torrance Partnership valued the asset at £10k	The Council Estates team have indicated £20-£30k	Strong
Legal title and relevant information	Feu disposition to the Council from the National Trust.  Right of pre-emption to the National Trust.  .	TPO may be required.  Boundary fence may have been moved.  HRA land – no objections, consent required from SG	Strong
Current use of the asset and potential impact	Land currently lying vacant and unused by the Council. Previous Play equipment has been removed. HRA land, and Housing has confirmed no intention to use for housing development.	TDCA request a right of access from Fuaran and rights over the Council's other property (Fuaran and the school site) for installation of services, should that be required; at no cost.	Strong
Requested purchase/discount value	Purchase requested at £1, giving a discount value of £9,999 up to £29,999.		Strong

Ability of organisation to pay	If approved at £1, payment would not be an issue		Very Strong
<b>Resourcing Assessment Summary:</b>		<i>Rating – Strong</i>	