

Community Empowerment Annual Report 2021/22

Community Asset Transfers and Participation Requests



Community Asset Transfers

	Number
Groups approaching the Council about an asset	7
Groups who have withdrawn before an Expression of Interest submitted	1
Expressions of Interest received	6
Groups who have withdrawn after an Expression of Interest submitted	0
Number of live cases	5
Groups who researched an alternative outcome	2
CAT Requests received	0
CAT Requests agreed to	0 (0%)
CAT Requests refused	0 (0%)
CAT Requests withdrawn	0
CAT decisions appealed	0 (0%)
CAT decisions appealed successfully	0 (0%)

Key Highlights 2021/22

Seven enquiries were received from community groups who were interested in a potential CAT. Of these, six resulted in an Expression of Interest. Each Eol has been supported by the CAT Team to find the best solution for that group. Of the six Eols that were received, two found an alternative outside of CAT which met their needs and the other four are still being worked on, alongside a legacy case from 2020/21. Of the cases that were supported in 2021/22:

1. Two community groups in Pitlochry, the Community Eco Hub and Pitlochry and Moulin Men's Shed, have developed a shared proposal for a disused toilet block in Pitlochry that has been vacant for some years. The Council is currently considering alternative uses for the site, and this will need to be taken into account when considering proposals from the group. The community groups propose to develop a training area that would be available anytime for members to make use of, as well as providing a repair café, skill share space and community tool library.
2. An Expression of Interest in a former Child and Family Centre in Perth has been received from a community of interest. The community group is looking to take over the asset to run an afterschool club and other community events, targeted specifically at children from Eastern European families, but open to all community members. The Council is currently considering alternative uses for the site, and this will need to be taken into account when considering proposals from the group.

3. An Expression of Interest in Ropemakers Close former toilet block was received. PLUS Perth is looking to turn the asset into a community space with a community café that is open to the public that can also be used by members of the nearby community garden. The CAT Team supported PLUS Perth to consider their proposals, and an alternative disposal outside the CAT process was found for the asset, under the 2010 Disposal of Land (Scotland) regulations. We anticipate that the sale of this property will be concluded in 2022/23.
4. An Expression of Interest was received in the former Straloch Primary School site. The community group's aims for the site are to provide a dedicated venue for the wider community to come together to explore food growing and to offer workshop and learning spaces. The community group is working on their legal structure, business plan and full CAT request form. It is anticipated that this will be received in 2022/23.

Our Approach

The Council is committed to working with community organisations to explore the full range of options open to them. Groups are encouraged and supported to have initial discussions and submit an Expression of Interest before they formally start the CAT process. This is intended to ensure groups are eligible and understand the process that would need to be followed to submit a full CAT request. This approach allows the Council to work with the group to identify the best solution, which need not necessarily be a full CAT request.

We take a customer-centred approach to CAT requests. Community groups are allocated a dedicated officer to act as a single point of contact and coordinate with staff across the Council to find the relevant information before feeding back. Once community groups have a clear business plan and feel confident that asset transfer is the right option, they are encouraged to start the formal CAT process. Throughout the process, representatives of the relevant Council services meet as a CAT Team to advise the group and progress their Request. A full description of the approach can be found on our webpage at <https://www.pkc.gov.uk/article/19819/Community-Asset-Transfer>

Promotion

CAT is promoted to the public via the dedicated webpage. The webpage contains all of the information a group needs to undertake the CAT process, including:

- an [animated video](#) that gives a hypothetical example of the CAT process in action.
- a Toolkit which allows the group to self-assess and determine if they are ready to take on an asset
- the Expression of Interest Form and general advice.
- a list of all Council owned assets.
- the Community Asset Transfer Request Form and Guidance Document; and
- a copy of the scoring matrix that the CAT Team uses to inform their recommendations for the Council committee.

Training and Support

In 2020/21, the Community Planning Team created a series of Learning Lunches for staff and a Podcast for elected members to raise awareness of the process for Community Asset Transfer in Perth and Kinross Council. Unfortunately, the Learning Lunches stopped during lockdown but will restart in 2022/23 and be supplemented by an e-learning module available to elected members and all Council staff.

The [CAT Toolkit](#) has been promoted to community groups interested in exploring whether a Community Asset Transfer is right for them. The toolkit aims to support community groups to work through the required steps to be eligible for Community Asset Transfer and help the group write their full CAT request. The toolkit is based on a self-assessment of their current activities, eligibility, and capacity to undertake a Community Asset Transfer.

As well as the CAT Toolkit, information sessions have been offered to community groups who would like to find out more about the CAT process. This has proved useful for officers and the community groups as it has provided an opportunity to share their plans and, in some cases, explore other alternative options that can be considered which the group were not previously aware of.

Improvement Actions for 2022/23

The Council will continue to support community groups to explore opportunities in owning, leasing, or accessing Council assets. Reflecting on performance in 2021/22 and what needs to happen to build on this in 2022/23, the following improvement actions have been identified:

Identified Issue	Action	Lead Service	Timescale
The number of requests and enquiries received to date suggests that levels of awareness of CAT, its opportunities, and responsibilities is unclear within community groups	Develop e-learning module on the new PKC Learn platform	Community Planning Team, Organisational Development Team, Corporate Communications	September 2022
	Approach COSS and work with them to undertake an independent review of our processes and information in Perth and Kinross		
	Deliver Communications Plan for Community Empowerment (including CAT), specifically the development of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Further learning lunches• A social media campaign• Information sessions for community organisations around the process of CAT in Perth & Kinross		
A list of all Council assets is available online but is difficult to screen and filter	Improve information provision so that those properties most suitable for CAT are easier to identify. Produce promotional materials for a small number of properties	PKC Corporate Property Asset Management Group	March 2023

Community facilities require physical improvements to make them more attractive for CAT and the local community	Working with Hub East Scotland and Robertson to promote the Helping Hands Initiative for community facilities to bid for improvement works to be carried out as part of the new Riverside Primary and Perth High School developments.	Community Planning Team, Property	September 2022
	Increase awareness and understanding of CAT and by utilising the Community Asset Transfer Enablement Fund to provide support to community groups to support the community asset transfer of buildings in disrepair, lever in matched/external funding and reduce burden of surplus buildings on Council.	Finance PKC Corporate Property Asset Management Group	

Participation Requests

	Number
Participation Requests received	0
Participation Requests that were invalid	0
Participation Requests that were valid	0
Participation Requests rejected	0
Participation Requests which resulted in a change	0

Perth and Kinross Council received no Participation Requests over 2021/22.

Promoting Participation Requests

Information about Participation Requests is provided on a specific webpage <https://www.pkc.gov.uk/article/19968/Participation-Requests>. This includes an [aminated video](#) about Participation Requests, which provides a hypothetical example of the process in action and all other relevant information about the Participation Requests process. If groups approach the Council about a related issue, the Community Planning Team will outline the various ways that they can get involved in influencing outcomes and shaping services, including their rights under the Participation Requests provision process.

As part of a broader review of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, Scottish Government have appointed the Scottish Community Development Centre to review Participation Requests and consider options for an appeals process. The Council are involved in a national group which is leading on this work.

Improvement Actions

The Council will continue to support communities that wish to get involved in improving outcomes for their community. Reflecting on performance in 2020/21 and what needs to happen to build on this in 2022/23, the following improvement actions have been identified:

Identified Issue	Improvement Action	Lead Service	Timescale
Other options for engagement and participation are also available and potentially underutilised	Promote the Consultation Hub and encourage communities to engage proactively at the earliest opportunity.	Community Planning Team	Ongoing
	Review and update infographics and other promotional material for Participation Requests	Community Planning Team, Organisational Development Team, Corporate Communications	September 2022
Promote alternative ways for people to shape services and improve outcomes.	Offer additional guidance to staff about statutory duties associated with Participation Requests and the broader Community Empowerment agenda. Use these to encourage staff to be more proactive, imaginative, and inclusive when undertaking consultation and engagement work. This is currently being undertaken through the Employee Experience linked to the P&K Offer	Community Planning Team and Organisational Development	December 2022