

## Community Empowerment Annual Report 2022/23

## COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER

	Number
Groups approaching the Council about an asset	26
Groups who have withdrawn before an Expression of Interest submitted	1
Expressions of Interest received	14
Groups who have withdrawn after an Expression of Interest submitted	3
Number of live cases	9
Groups who reached an alternative outcome	7
Group who enquired but have not gone any further with CAT	5
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CAT Requests withdrawn	0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 were appealed successfully	0 (0%)

## 1. Summary of Community Asset Transfer Activity

- 1.1 The diagram below shows the current process that community groups and Council Officers follow when a group indicates an interest in an asset.

**Step 1** – Group identifies a Council asset, which will help them to meet their aspirations.

**Step 2** – Group contacts PKC for initial discussion about the asset and the CAT process.

**Step 3** – Expression of Interest (Eol) is received. Some groups will skip Step 2 and go straight to Step 3

**Step 4** – CAT Team is asked for feedback on the Eol, and a follow up meeting is arranged.

**Step 5** – Follow up meeting discusses proposals in more detail and options for progress.

**Step 6** – Group proceeds with best option, potentially a full CAT Request

- 1.2 Perth and Kinross Council's approach to CAT encourages an initial informal conversation with the interested group to make them aware of the CAT process and to provide them with all the possible options that they may wish to explore. This process has proved to be beneficial as it has allowed a relationship to be quickly established and for key issues to be highlighted at the outset. Over 2022/23, five groups started the CAT process, however, they subsequently decided not to submit an Expression of Interest, as they wished to explore other options first. This has prevented the group and Council officers from potentially spending significant time and resources on a CAT transfer request that would ultimately not be successful. Following discussions with Council officers, 7 community groups who had indicated an interest in CAT found an alternative solution that better met their priorities. In the majority of cases, this resulted in a direct lease negotiation with the Council's Estates team. These groups decided on this solution as they felt the lease costs being offered were reasonable and the lease allows them to:
- trial their initiative with the security of not having full ownership responsibility.
  - implement their proposals quickly, as no legal timescales apply as they do under Part 5 of the Community Empowerment Act (2015).
  - try out their proposals in the knowledge that the Council will retain a level of responsibility as landlord.
- 1.3 A summary of some of the key projects from the remaining 21 groups interested in CAT is provided below.

### **Centrum Edukacyjne Bajka CIC**

- 1.4 Centrum Edukacyjne Bajka CIC approached the Council in December 2021 looking at a potential lease of the Former Child and Family Centre on Gowans Terrace in Perth. Centrum Edukacyjne Bajka CIC has been delivering a Polish afterschool and Saturday Club, working with 250 young people from local schools each week.
- 1.5 In January 2023, Centrum Edukacyjne Bajka (Bajka) CIC formally started negotiations with the Council for a 25-year lease for the asset with the option for full ownership in the future. This lease arrangement was agreed on 8 March 2023 and since then Bajka has undertaken a programme of works to bring the buildings up to standard. The Council has supported this, including a full electrical safety check and overhaul prior to the lease being signed. Bajka expects to open the buildings for use in the early Autumn as they are carrying out some internal redevelopment work to make best use of the space.

### **PLUS Perth**

- 1.6 PLUSPerth contacted Perth and Kinross Council in September 2020 looking for full ownership of the former toilet block on Ropemakers Close in Perth to make it a community space and café. Council officers have supported PLUSPerth to take on this asset and have carried out the necessary legal

requirements for the site to be transferred to PLUSPerth, due to complications and split ownership of the land on which the buildings sit.

- 1.7 In July 2022, the transfer of the asset to PLUSPerth was finalised. The sale was completed under the Disposal of Land (Scotland) Regulations (2010), which is typically a shorter process than a transfer under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. PLUSPerth was content with the negotiated price and did not see any merit in seeking a transfer for a discounted value under the CAT provisions.

### **North Muirton Community Group**

- 1.8 The North Muirton Community Group signed a management agreement for the North Muirton Community Centre in August 2022 and took on formal management of the facility in February 2023. The asset had previously been managed by Live Active Leisure. The asset has been significantly upgraded since August 2022, through investment from the Council in the toilets and access points, and external funding gained by North Muirton Community Council for a new kitchen and flooring. These improvements are reflected in the significant growth in bookings and income since August 2022. Over quarter one in 22-23, on average LAL took 4-6 bookings a week, however over the same period in 23-24, the Community Centre is now used on thirteen separate occasions a week.

### **Aberfeldy Development Trust**

- 1.9 Aberfeldy Development Trust submitted an Expression of Interest for the former Slaughterhouse Site in Aberfeldy in September 2022. The Development Trust has been working with the Council's Affordable Housing Team and the Communities Housing Trust to identify possible sites for new community-led affordable housing in the area. This need was identified in the Aberfeldy Community Housing Needs Survey, carried out in 2021 in partnership with the Communities Housing Trust.
- 1.10 The Development Trust has been working on a full CAT Request for the site over the last six months and has been successful in getting external funding to undertake feasibility and survey work. It is anticipated that the formal CAT Request will be submitted in 2023/24.

### **Alyth Development Trust**

- 1.11 Alyth Development Trust is interested in the former fire station and surrounding ground situated on Mill Street in Alyth. The building is currently being used by the Waste Services Team as a break room, storage facility, and recycling point. The Development Trust is seeking to retain these services under their proposals to create a community hub in the existing storage building and to create a skate park on the land next to it, or potentially elsewhere in the village.

- 1.12 The Development Trust is currently consulting with the local community to share its vision and seek to gather support for the proposals and has sought a valuation of the asset to help pull together their proposals. We anticipate further conversations will continue between the Development Trust and Council Officers over 23/24, and full CAT Request will be made in 2023/24.

### **Fossoway Community Development Trust**

- 1.13 In January 2022, the Kinross-shire Local Committee agreed to give the emerging Fossoway Community Development Trust (FCDT) 12 months to formally establish and bring forward proposals for the former Primary School and adjoining house at Blairingone.
- 1.14 The Council received an Expression of Interest from FCDT in July 2022 and since then Council officers have offered support with community engagement activity and identifying possible funding for feasibility and survey work. In January 2023, a third-party private company also contacted the Council looking to buy the assets. The two parties are currently considering the options and seeking community feedback, and we anticipate that a full CAT Request will be submitted by the end of June 2023.

### **Sprout Perthshire Ltd**

- 1.15 Sprout Perthshire Ltd is a joint venture, comprising two community groups in the town, the Climate Café and the Pitlochry Men's Shed submitted an Expression of Interest in Burnside Toilets in September 2021. After a period of reflection and consideration of other options, including support from the Community Ownership Support Service (COSS), Sprout confirmed their interest in a CAT of Burnside Toilets in November 2022.
- 1.16 Due to other interest in the asset from commercial bidders in December 2022, the asset was put on the open market in January 2023, with a closing date of 20 April 2023. A full CAT Request for the asset was submitted by this date, alongside other private bids. A report with recommendations on disposal will be taken to the Council's Property Sub Committee in August 2023.

### **Dunkeld & Birnam Men's Shed**

- 1.17 The Dunkeld and Birnam Men's Shed was established following the completion of the Dunkeld and Birnam Community Action Plan 2022-2027, which identified a need for improved care provision and independent living. The group aims to tackle social isolation and improve the mental well-being of men in the local community by providing a space for local men to learn new skills and form a peer support network.
- 1.18 The group submitted an Expression of Interest in August 2022 but did not specify a particular asset. Council officers offered advice about a number of assets in the local area and encouraged the group to also consider a joint venture with other groups in the area.

- 1.19 Perth and Kinross Council received a formal request to lease a section of the Industrial Estate on Station Road on 1 February 2023. As of March 2023, the group has been looking into the practicalities of establishing a semi-permanent cabin on the site, which can be moved at a later date if necessary.

### **Dunkeld Creative Collaborative**

- 1.20 The Dunkeld Creative Collaborative (DCC) contacted Perth and Kinross Council in June 2022. They aim to create an artisan workspace village on the Dunkeld North garages site adjacent to the main car park on the north side of Dunkeld.
- 1.21 Since submitting the Expression of Interest, DCC has undertaken engagement work with the Community Council and the newly established Dunkeld and Birnam Community Development Trust. As a result of this work, it has been agreed that any formal CAT Request will come through the Development Trust as an eligible body under the legislation. The Development Trust is currently seeking financial support to undertake some feasibility work on the site, and we expect that we will receive a full CAT Request for the asset in late 2023.
- 1.22 Perth and Kinross Council, along with Live Active Leisure, have supported the group to take on this community asset, and have provided support and training to the group when it has been required.

## **2. Other related asset activity**

- 2.1 Across 2022/23, various community groups have contacted the Council's Estates team directly, looking for leases and other management agreements for Council assets. Although this does not happen under the provisions of Community Asset Transfer, it ultimately results in a community group taking some form of control over a Council asset and is therefore contained in this report. There have been seven approaches made by community groups to Perth and Kinross Council this way.
- 2.2 An example of this activity is the granting of a 25-year sub-lease of the Pavilion at Pitlochry Recreation Ground to Highland Perthshire Communities Partnership (HPCP) on behalf of Pavilion User Groups (PUGS). The ground floor changing rooms/showers/WC facilities will be upgraded and made available to sports clubs playing on the recreation ground. The first floor will contain a basic café facility and additional toilet facilities will be provided elsewhere on the site.

## **3. Improvement Actions Progress**

- 3.1 As part of each Annual Report, officers have identified improvements that can be made to the Council's approach to Community Asset Transfer. A small number of improvement actions were identified in the 2021/22 Annual Report and this section summarises the progress made to achieve them in 2022/23.

## **CAT Marketing**

- 3.2 Over 2022/23, a template has been developed that links to Concerto, the Council's online property management system, to allow all relevant information on an asset to be presented in a user-friendly manner. This information includes site and floor plans; summary condition surveys; planned maintenance programmes; summaries of running costs; and an assessment of the asset's suitability. This information will help an interested group determine whether or not the asset is likely to meet their needs at a much earlier stage in the process.
- 3.3 It is anticipated that the preliminary testing of the template will be completed by July 2023 and thereafter a small number of assets will be marketed in this way on the Council webpage at [Community Asset Transfer - Perth & Kinross Council \(pkc.gov.uk\)](https://www.pkc.gov.uk/community-asset-transfer)

## **Helping Hands**

- 3.4 The 2021/22 Annual Report included an action to invest in assets that would lend themselves to a Community Asset Transfer, thereby making a more attractive proposition for community groups.
- 3.5 Helping Hands is a partnership with Robertson Construction and Hub East Scotland which makes funding available to support community assets in localities where a large capital project is being developed. This is part of the Community Benefits requirement of tendering for large capital projects. In 2022/23, funding of £15,000 was earmarked for investment in community facilities as a result of the Riverside Primary School capital development in Perth City North.
- 3.6 After a competitive application process involving 18 separate bids, the Moncreiffe Community Centre was selected and in March 2023, the refurbishment work was carried out, including a new kitchen and lighting being installed, and the hall being repainted. The Council also invested £10,000 to provide secure shutters for the main windows which had been the subject of regular vandalism over a period of years. The Council expects that, following this investment, the Moncreiffe Community Centre will be transferred into some form of community ownership or management in 2023/24.

## **Awareness Raising and Promotion**

- 3.7 In March 2023, four information sessions were carried out for all Community Councils in Perth & Kinross. The final session was hybrid so that the recording and all other relevant information could be shared across all 43 Community Councils. Part of the sessions outlined the rights provided to communities through the Community Empowerment Act, particularly Part 3 (Participation Requests) and Part 5 (Community Asset Transfer).

- 3.8 CAT is promoted to the public via the dedicated webpage <https://www.pkc.gov.uk/article/19819/Community-Asset-Transfer>, which 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.
  - the Expression of Interest Form and general advice
  - a list of all Council assets
  - the Community Asset Transfer Request Form and Guidance Document
  - a copy of the scoring matrix that the CAT Team uses to inform their recommendations for the Council committee.

#### **4. Our Approach**

- 4.1 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. When 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 support them to develop their proposals. Interested groups are encouraged to seek independent support from the Perth and Kinross Association of Voluntary Services (PKAVS) and the Development Trusts Association Scotland Community Ownership Support Service (COSS).

#### **5. Training and Support for Staff and Community Organisations**

- 5.1 Over 2022/23, a number of national and local networks have been set up to support staff involved in the CAT process. The Community Ownership Support Service (COSS) has set up a quarterly forum for public sector bodies to come together to look at key issues and ideas that have been coming up for staff involved in CAT across Scotland.
- 5.2 In 2022/23, the PK Learn Community Empowerment E-Learning module was updated and refreshed in partnership with colleagues across Tayside to reflect more recent experiences from across the region. From this review, a new Tayside and Fife Community Empowerment Network was created, which meets once a quarter to share good practice and experiences in the four local authorities. Over 23/24, a separate PKC-specific module will be created to highlight the processes adopted in Perth and Kinross Council around Community Asset Transfer. This work will support the training and development of PKC staff around their knowledge and understanding of CAT, and their roles and responsibilities.

## 6. Improvement Actions for 2023/24

- 6.1 The Council will continue to support community groups to explore opportunities in owning, leasing, or accessing Council assets. Reflecting on performance in 2022/23 and what needs to happen to build on this in 2023/24, 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 remain mixed	Implement a CAT Transformation Programme, with an initial focus on community halls and facilities currently managed by Live Active Leisure	Community Planning Team, CAT Team, Live Active Leisure	December 2023
	Use CAT Enablement Fund to upgrade and improve assets as a condition of groups taking on full ownership of assets	CAT Team	March 2024
	Development of an e-learning module on CAT and PR on the new PKC Learn platform relevant to PKC processes	Community Planning Team, Organisational Development Team, Corporate Communications	September 2023
	Deliver community-based Community Empowerment awareness-raising sessions in partnership with PKAVS	Community Planning Team PKAVS Communities	March 2024
	Review the CAT Marketing approach to assist in the identification of this small number of properties to be marketed using this new material	Communications Community Planning Team Asset Management	September 2023
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	October 2023
	Complete the preliminary work on creating an asset profile template and pilot it on a few assets that would lend themselves to a community ownership solution.	Community Planning Team Corporate Design Property Services	July 2023



## PARTICIPATION REQUESTS

### 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 2022/23. Awareness raising was provided to Community Councils in March 2023, as part of a wider series of Community Council Information Sessions. The low numbers are not a unique situation, and it is broadly similar to what is happening across Scotland.

### 1. Promoting Participation Requests

- 1.1 Information about Participation Requests is provided on a specific webpage <https://www.pkc.gov.uk/article/19968/Participation-Requests>. This includes an [animated video](#) about Participation Requests, which provides a hypothetical example of the process in action. If groups approach the Council about a related issue, the Community Planning Team will outline the various ways that community groups can get involved in influencing outcomes and shaping services, including their rights under the Participation Requests provision process.
- 1.2 As part of a broader review of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, the Scottish Government has appointed the Scottish Community Development Centre to review Participation Requests and consider options for an appeals process. The Council is involved in a national group that is leading this work.

### 2. Improvement Actions

- 2.1 The Council will continue to support communities that wish to get involved in improving outcomes for their community. Reflecting on performance in 2022/23 and what needs to happen to build on this in 2023/24, 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 on the Participation Requests Webpage 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 2024
Staff could be doing more to 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. This would be achieved by the new PK Learn E- Learning Module and by a series of Learning sessions offered to all Staff. The overall aim of using these opportunities is to encourage staff to be more proactive, imaginative, and inclusive when undertaking consultation and engagement work.	Community Planning Team and Organisational Development	December 2024