

Community Empowerment Annual Report 2020/21

Community Asset Transfers and Participation Requests



Community Asset Transfers

	Number
Groups approaching the Council about an asset	5
Groups who have withdrawn before an Expression of Interest submitted	0
Expressions of Interest received	4
Groups who have withdrawn after an Expression of Interest submitted	0
Number of live cases	4
Groups who researched an alternative outcome	1
CAT Requests received	2
CAT Requests agreed to	1 (50%)
CAT Requests refused	0 (0%)
CAT Requests withdrawn	1
CAT decisions appealed	0 (0%)
CAT decisions appealed successfully	0 (0%)

Key Highlights 2020/21

In 2020/21, the Council received two formal Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Requests from the Rannoch Community Trust and Letham4All. Rannoch Community Trust applied for full ownership of the former Kinloch Rannoch Outdoor Centre, in order to redevelop the buildings to provide a new community hub with pub/restaurant and accommodation and meeting/office space that would be of benefit to the local community. This CAT request was received in April 2020 and approved by Full Council on 30 July 2020. Work is ongoing to complete the legal handover of the site to Rannoch Community Trust and we anticipate the legal sign off on this CAT will be completed imminently.

Letham4All submitted a CAT Request for the Letham Community Centre in North Perth in July 2020. This is part of a broader collaborative project between the Council and Letham4All to repurpose the building into the "Letham Wellbeing Hub," which will ultimately be managed and owned by Letham4All. Following conversations with the trustees of Letham4All, an alternative approach to the transfer of the asset has been agreed, which will use the Disposal of Land (Scotland) Regulations, as opposed to Community Asset Transfer.

The key focus for the CAT Team in supporting any interested group is to find a solution that best fits the needs of the group and their community. Therefore, it does not necessarily require the group to go through the full CAT process. In 2020/21, we supported three groups who approached the Council about an asset to work towards the best solution for them:

1. PLUS Perth submitted an Expression of Interest for a disused toilet block in Perth city centre. Work is currently processing to assess the options available to the community group to achieve their desired outcome. The CAT team continues to offer support around the legal title for the site and valuation.
2. Blairgowrie and Rattray Development Trust submitted an Expression of Interest for an asset currently used as office space and the town library. The community group is currently consulting their local community to produce an updated Community Action Plan, as a key source of evidence and support. Depending on the outcome of this activity, we expect a full CAT Request for this asset to be submitted in 2021/22.
3. Jeanfield Swifts football club approached the Council with an Expression of Interest in a local greenspace. After discussions with the PKC CAT Team rather than a full CAT, a straightforward management lease would be the preferred option for the community group and work is ongoing with the football club to make this happen. Part of the site has been redeveloped by a third party and this is also part of the discussions.

Our Approach

The Council is committed to working with community organisations to explore the 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 identify whether the option of conventional disposal, whether through a sale or lease, could better suit the needs of the group.

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 plan in place 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](#) which gives a hypothetical example of the CAT process in action;
- 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 Podcast for elected members to raise awareness of the process for Community Asset Transfer in Perth and Kinross Council. The CAT team has also had external guidance from Community Ownership Support Service (COSS), funded by the Scottish Government to provide independent advice to community transfer bodies and public agencies. PKC staff awareness and training sessions have been developed over 2020/21. Learning lunch sessions and an e-learning module will be launched during 2021/22. This had been scheduled for 2020/21, but due to the coronavirus pandemic, some of this work was delayed, with staff being re-tasked to support the Council's emergency response.

A new [CAT Toolkit](#) has been developed in 2020/21 to support community groups to work through the required steps to be eligible for Community Asset Transfer and support the group to 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.

Improvement Actions for 2020/21

The Council will continue to support community groups to explore opportunities in owning, leasing, or having access to Council assets. Reflecting on performance in 2020/21 and what needs to happen to build on this in 2021/22, 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 remains mixed	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 	Community Planning Team, Organisational Development Team, Corporate Communications	Development of e-learning module September 2021
	Work with colleagues to ensure that CAT forms a central part of the P&K Offer under the Equalities, Empowerment and Fairness Workstream		Establishment of P&K Offer November 2021
Continue to support Live Active Leisure with community engagement activity	Undertake specific work in partnership with LAL about opportunities for CAT around assets they currently operate and manage in communities across Perth and Kinross	Community Planning Team, CAT Team, Live Active Leisure, Corporate Communications	March 2022
A list of all Council assets is available online but is difficult to screen and filter	Improve information provision so that those properties which are most suitable for CAT are easier to identify. Produce promotional materials for a small number of properties	PKC Corporate Property Asset Management Group	March 2022

Participation Requests

	Number
Participation Requests received	1
Participation Requests that were invalid	0
Participation Requests that were valid	1
Participation Requests rejected	1
Participation Requests which resulted in a change	0

Perth and Kinross Council received one Participation Request in this period, from Scone and District Community Council regarding the Cross Tay Link Road. The Community Council requested be involved in discussions around 'The 'greening' of the Cross Tay Link Road to the North of Scone, e.g., active travel, non-motorised road users, and environmental improvements.' The Request was received in March, and a response was provided in April 2021. The Council ultimately decided to refuse the request on the grounds that, at the time, the Council was fully engaged in the formal tendering process for the project outlined in the Request and there was no scope for further community participation at the stage. Future opportunities for further community engagement and participation in the delivery of the project were outlined and the Council remains committed and ready to support this as the project moves forward.

In 2019/20, the Council received one Participation Request from the North Inch and Muirton Community Council. Over 2020/21, work has been taking place through the Perth, People, Place programme and the Community Council have been directly involved in this. It is anticipated that work on the Street Design application will focus specifically on the Muirton area of Perth and fully engage the community in that process, which will seek to deliver on the aspirations outlined by the Community Council in their Participation Request.

Promoting Participation Requests

Information about Participation Requests is provided on a specific webpage <https://www.pkc.gov.uk/article/19968/Participation-Requests>. If groups approach the Council about a particular issue, the Community Planning Team can advise them about the Participation Request process, as well as other ways to get involved in influencing outcomes and shaping services.

All guidance documentation and paperwork on the Council's website have been updated to be more community-friendly and accessible. As part of a broader communications campaign on Community Empowerment, an [aminated video](#) about Participation Requests has been produced, which provides a hypothetical example of the process in action.

Improvement Actions

The Council will continue to support communities who want 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 2021/22, 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
	Work with colleagues to ensure that PRs form a part of the P&K Offer under the Equalities, Empowerment and Fairness Workstream	Community Planning Team, Organisational Development Team, Corporate Communications	Establishment of P&K Offer November 2021
Staff could be doing more to promote alternative ways for people to shape services and improve outcomes.	Offer additional guidance to staff and consider creating a podcast to communicate statutory duties associated with Participation Requests and the broader Community Empowerment agenda. Use these as opportunities to encourage staff to be more proactive, imaginative, and inclusive when undertaking consultation and engagement work.	Community Planning Team and Organisational Development	December 2021