

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2023/2024

1. STRUCTURE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is structured over the following sections:
Section 2: Participation Requests
Section 3: Community Asset Transfer
Section 4: Our Approach
Section 5: Promotion
Section 6: Progress Made Over 23/24 and Improvement Actions for 24/25

2. PARTICIPATION REQUESTS

- 2.1 In 2023/2024, PKC received no Participation requests. Following the suggested improvement action for 2023/24, the Consultation Hub has been promoted as an opportunity for community groups to become involved in shaping outcomes and services at the earliest possible stage. The Consultation Hub is an online platform where public surveys and consultations can be held to gather the views of communities. This reduces the need for community members to feel they need to submit a Participation Request by involving communities as early as possible in the decision-making process. An example of where this has been used is for the recent consultation on the future of the public toilets in Auchterarder where 579 individuals took part in an online survey.
- 2.2 The Scottish Communities Development Centre are conducting a national review of Participations Requests. PKC officers have had the opportunity to input to the review and will attend the final meeting which aims to formalise recommendations on the Participation Request process. These recommendations will be submitted to Scottish Government by the Scottish Communities Development Centre.

3. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER

- 3.1 The following table gives an overview of the number of community groups who have approached PKC to enquire about the use, lease, or management of an asset. Examples of some of these groups are detailed in the covering report.

	Number
Groups approaching the Council about an asset	31
Groups who have withdrawn before an Expression of Interest submitted	7
Expressions of Interest received	12
Groups who have withdrawn after an Expression of Interest submitted	1
Number of live cases	21
Groups who reached an alternative outcome	2
CAT Requests received	0
CAT Requests agreed to	0
CAT Requests refused	0
CAT Requests withdrawn	0
CAT decisions appealed	0
CAT decisions appealed successfully	0

3.2 Groups who have reached an alternative outcome typically discuss options with the Community Empowerment Officer and are then introduced to our Estates team who can co-ordinate a lease or negotiated sale. Not included in these figures are groups who are referred to Estates through other Services. An overview of some of the work co-ordinated by Estates is provided in the covering report.

4. OUR APPROACH

4.1 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 also allows the opportunity to discuss other disposal routes which may suit the needs of the group. There are other aids and tools available to any interested group, which will help them to determine whether or not to move forward with a CAT Request.

4.2 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> as well as in the new regular Elected Member CAT Update Briefing.

5. PROMOTION

- 5.1 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](#) giving a hypothetical example of the CAT process; Expression of Interest Form; list of all Council owned assets; CAT Request Form and Guidance Document; a copy of the scoring matrix that the CAT Team uses to inform their recommendations for the Council committee.

6. PROGRESS MADE OVER 23/24 AND IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS FOR 24/25

CAT Marketing

- 6.1 Documents have been produced to better market some of the sites which may be suitable for Community Asset Transfer. These are initially for community halls across Perth and Kinross, which are currently managed by Live Active Leisure, Officers are now working to develop this information further into a package that can be advertised on the PKC CAT Webpage.
- 6.2 As part of the Pitlochry review the Properties team developed material which gave an overview of various assets which was shared with the community. This gave officers experience of how members of the community would engage with sites being advertised as potentially surplus. Three Expressions of Interest have followed discussion around these properties.

Training and Support

- 6.3 In February 2024 an information session to inform communities about the Community Asset Transfer process was held in Pitlochry. Pitlochry was identified as a suitable location as a result of the local asset review. This event was organised by PKC officers, who invited a Community Ownership Support Service (COSS) advisor to present, and officers were on hand to provide local context. COSS are an independent body that can provide support and guidance to groups during the CAT process. This event can be replicated in other areas following asset reviews.
- 6.4 A new regular Elected Member briefing will be sent to ward councillors to help keep them informed of interest within their local area. A summary of the CAT process has been designed to be attached to this, and this document can also be made available to officers who may find it useful.

Improvement Actions for 2024/25

- 6.5 The Council will continue to support community groups to explore opportunities in owning, leasing, or accessing Council assets. Reflecting on performance in 2023/24 and the potential to build on this in 2024/25, the following improvement actions have been identified:

Identified Issue	Action	Lead Service	Timescale
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. Explore how the promotional materials designed in the last year can be best displayed.	Community Learning and Development Team PKC Corporate Property Asset Management Group	December 2024
Community facilities require physical improvements to make Community ownership more appealing to Communities	Officers to explore options for funding and potentially organise funding information events if enough funders can be identified.	Community Learning and Development Team	March 2025
Communication to keep Elected Members up-to-date could be improved	Regular EM Briefing to be published.	Community Learning and Development Team	April 2024
Provide Elected Members with a better understanding and overview of the CAT and participation request process.	A workshop to be held with Elected Members	Community Learning and Development Team	September 2024
Community groups tend to come forward to save properties which often means there are tight timescales.	Officers to explore communication for communities prior to properties being declared surplus.	Community Learning and Development Team	October 2024