



Community Wealth Building in Scotland: The Evolution of Policy and Practice

Policy Spotlight



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August 2024

Scottish Government Strategic Research Programme 2022-2027

SRUC-E1-1: Novel insights on Scotland's rural and island economies (NISRIE)

Deliverable D2.2: Policy Spotlight Briefing on Community Wealth Building policy in Scotland



Highlights

What were we trying to find out?

Community Wealth Building is a people-centred approach to local economic development, which redirects wealth back into the local economy, and places control and benefits into the hands of local people ([Scottish Land Commission, n.d.](#)). The Scottish Government has adopted a Community Wealth Building approach to economic development as a means of delivering the wellbeing objectives outlined in the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) to deliver wealth and prosperity for everyone. Community Wealth Building has been a core policy principle for the Scottish Government and for local authorities since 2022 through the NSET and the funded pilot projects.

This Policy Spotlight reviews the evolution of Community Wealth Building policy and practice in Scotland over the last few years, with reflections on what this means for rural and island communities. This report is the second in a series of three reports produced through the [‘Novel Insights on Scotland’s Rural and Island Economies \(NISRIE\)’ project](#), which is part of the Scottish Government’s Strategic Research Programme 2022-27. The first report explored how Community Wealth Building can be applied in a rural and island context and the third report will explore international experiences of adopting this approach.

What did we do?

Researchers undertook a desk-based review of the evolution of Community Wealth Building policy and practice in Scotland. We reviewed the history of Community Wealth Building approaches and their adoption in Scotland, initially through the designated pilot areas and then more widely, and then discuss the Community Wealth Building consultation and the legislation which is currently being developed.

What did we learn?

The Community Wealth Building approach in Scotland was inspired by its adoption elsewhere internationally, with the Scottish Government’s Programme for Government in 2020-21 recognising the need to rethink local economies and communities as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Funding was announced for pilot areas and a commitment was made to develop a Community Wealth Building Bill through the Bute House Agreement. The Scottish Government ran a consultation on this in early 2023, in which many respondents argued the need for an approach which requires public bodies to embed Community Wealth Building into their work and to produce collaborative and place-based Community Wealth Building strategies and action plans, combined with ‘bottom-up’ activities by communities, would be most favourable. Various organisations have worked to inform the adoption of a Community Wealth Building approach in Scotland, including the Centre for Local

Economic Strategies, the Economic Development Association Scotland and Scottish Rural Action, with the latter focusing on its adoption in a rural and island context.

What are our main findings?

Whilst there has been increased Scottish focus on Community Wealth Building in recent years, the approach is not new. Since its emergence in the United States twenty years ago, the approach has evolved and perspectives on its applicability in a UK and Scottish have developed recently, becoming increasingly evident in Scottish policy discourse. A summary of key timelines regarding Community Wealth Building in Scottish policy and practice is given below.

Adopting Community Wealth Building principles can help to empower communities and tackle inequalities. It is important to understand how the principles might apply differently in a rural and island context and how policy and practice may need to reflect that. For example, taking a broad perspective on which organisations may play the role of anchor institutions is important, as is understanding how these organisations network together to support wealth generation locally (and how these networks can be enhanced), and how they work in genuine, equitable partnership arrangements with external organisations.

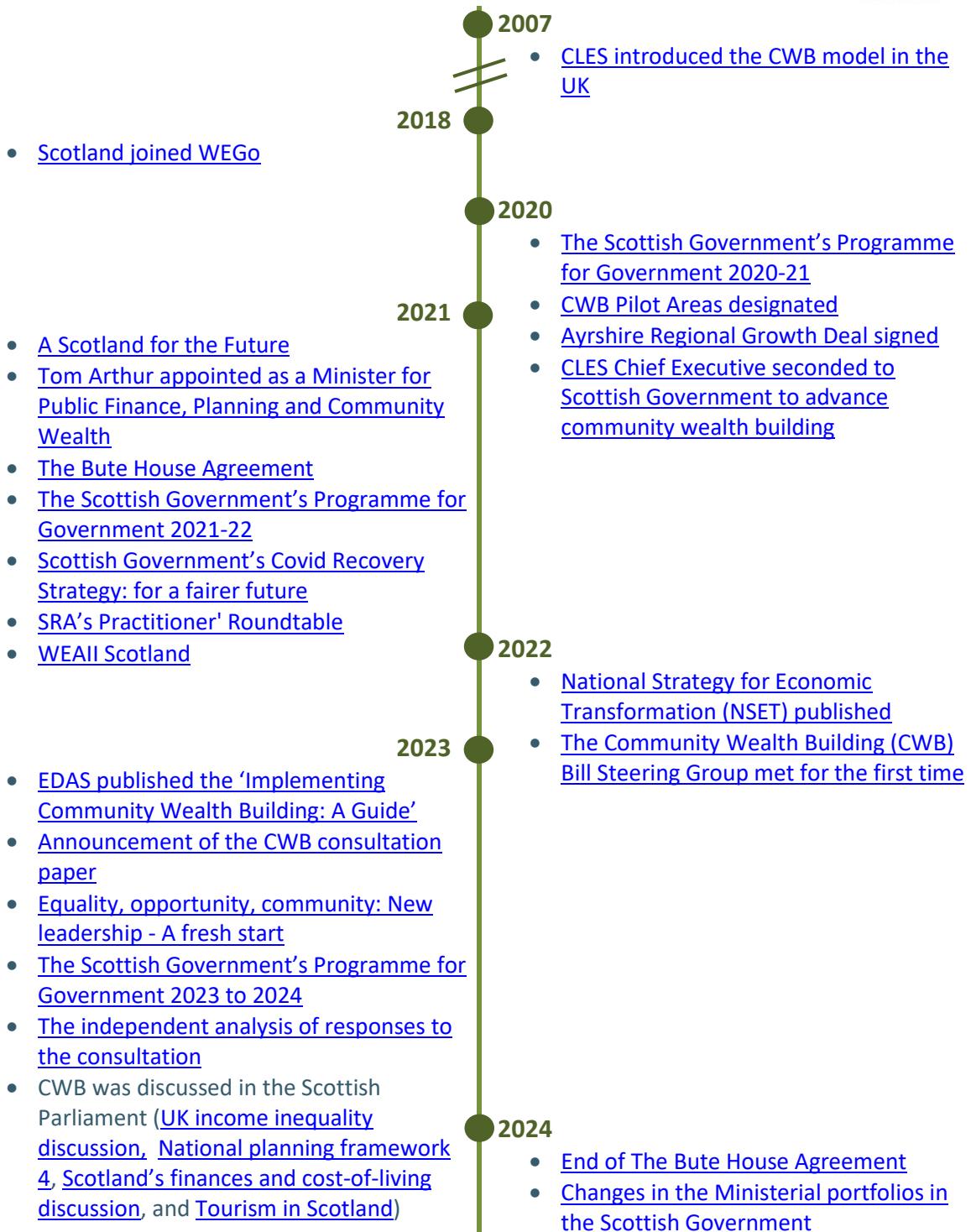
Understanding how Community Wealth Building principles may align with other Scottish Government priorities, including land reform, community empowerment and achieving a wellbeing economy, is also important, not least to inform how different policy interventions may be shaped to address all these priorities.

Sharing learning across Community Wealth Building projects and initiatives is important, as is acknowledging and enhancing the long history of these types of approaches in many (though not all) rural and island communities in Scotland through a variety of different activities, including crofting and the role of small and micro private, social and third sector organisations.





EVOLUTION OF COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING IN SCOTTISH POLICY AND PRACTICE



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List of Acronyms

CLES	Centre for Local Economic Strategies
CWB	Community Wealth Building
EDAS	Economic Development Association Scotland
NISRIE	Novel Insights on Scotland's Rural and Island Economies
NSET	Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation
RESAS	Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services
SenScot	Social Enterprise Network Scotland
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SRA	Scottish Rural Action
SRP	Strategic Research Programme 2022-27
SRUC	Scotland's Rural College
UK	United Kingdom
WEGo	Wellbeing Economy Governments
WEAll Scotland	The Wellbeing Economy Alliance Scotland

The five-year 'Novel Insights on Scotland's Rural and Island Economies (NISRIE)' project is funded through the Rural Economy topic, within the Rural Futures Theme of the Scottish Government's 2022-2027 Strategic Research Programme on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture that is managed by the Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services (RESAS) Division.

This report was reviewed by Professor Andrew Barnes (Head of Department, Rural Economy, Environment and Society Department, SRUC) on 4th June 2024.

1 Introduction

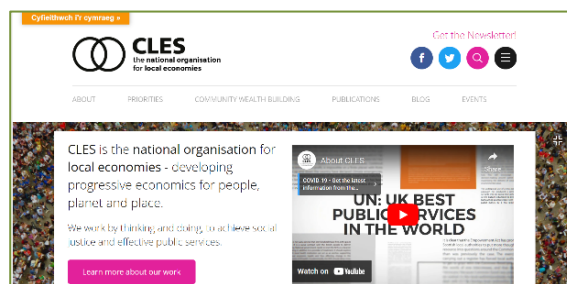
1. As part of the [Scottish Government's Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services \(RESAS\) Strategic Research Programme 2022-27 \(SRP\)](#) researchers at Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) are exploring the characteristics of, and current challenges and opportunities facing, rural and island economies and communities through the '[Novel insights on Scotland's rural and island economies](#)' (NISRIE, SRUC-E1-1) project.
2. This project sits within Theme E: Rural Futures of the 2022-27 Strategic Research Programme, alongside projects examining issues relating to rural communities and land reform, land management and land values¹.
3. This Policy Spotlight reviews the evolution of Community Wealth Building policy and practice in Scotland over recent years. It sits alongside the [rapid evidence review of Community Wealth Building](#) and its specific application in a rural and island context, which was published in 2023, and a review of international evidence and good practice on Community Wealth Building which will be published in 2024. This work informs the primary research which will be undertaken on this topic as part of years 3-5 of the Strategic Research Programme from 2024-2027.
4. The rapid evidence review explored the application of the Community Wealth Building concept in rural and island areas, through reviewing a range of academic and other evidence. The report found that the majority of Community Wealth Building research and practice has mainly focused on urban contexts and that the application of the approach in rural and island communities may need to be adapted to take account of the different characteristics of these areas.

1.1 Introduction to Community Wealth Building

Community Wealth Building is defined as a place-based approach to local economic development, which redirects wealth back into the local economy, and places control and benefits into the hands of local people. It was initially inspired by co-operative and solidarity economies in Mondragon in the Basque region in Spain and Emilia-Romagna in Italy ([Dennis and Stanley, 2023](#)), developed in the United States by the [Democracy Collaborative](#) and piloted in Cleveland Ohio, and introduced to the UK by the [Centre for Local Economic Strategies \(CLES\)](#).

¹ The NISRIE project complements a related Rural Economy programme of work at the James Hutton Institute - [Informing a socially and spatially just future for the Scottish rural economy: pinpointing opportunities, assets and support needs](#).

5. The Centre for Local Economic Strategies defines Community Wealth Building as being “*about developing wealth with local roots and ownership*” (cited in Scottish Government 2023, p8). Atterton and Glass (2023) adopted Power and Goodwin’s (2021) definition of Community Wealth Building: “*Community wealth building reorganises local economies to ensure they are best placed to tackle the inequalities and disadvantages that are now, more than ever, so acutely felt by people across the UK.*” [Dennis and Stanley \(2023\)](#) added to this definition by stating that the approach is built around local investment and supply chains, community land trusts, community corporations and co-operatives, and other place-based organisations unlikely to relocate ([Guinan and O’Neill 2019](#), pp. 24–8). Both local organisations and anchor institutions are “*fixed in place and rooted to a locality or region by virtue of their organisational design, ‘anchoring’ them to their local economies*” ([Lacey-Barnacle, Smith and Foxon, 2023](#)). Such investments lead to the creation of social capital through community engagement and place-based as well as organisational identification processes² ([Prinos and Manley, 2023](#)).



6. In the UK, the '[Preston model](#)' is a well-documented example of the Community Wealth Building approach within an urban setting. In accordance with Community Wealth Building principles, anchor institutions are seen as having a central role in driving forward changes in Preston. In this case, these are key organisations that are significant employers with a strong local presence, including Preston City Council, the University of Central Lancashire, Community Gateway Housing Association, and Lancashire Constabulary. Preston’s approach has been evaluated through a range of outcomes, including an increase in procurement spending retained locally (particularly by these anchor institutions), the development of worker-owned cooperatives across a range of sectors, an increase in the proportion of workers locally who are paid at or above the Living Wage, and heightened attention to local skills and employment needs, with local education and training institutions actively involved in meeting these requirements.

1.2 Community Wealth Building core principles

7. In their [February 2023 evidence review](#), Atterton and Glass (2023) elaborated five core principles of Community Wealth Building based on models developed by both the [Scottish Government](#) (for Scotland) and [The Centre for Local Economic Strategies \(CLES\)](#) (for the UK):

² Organisational identification consists of feelings of loyalty, pride, belonging, and attachment, leading to the support of an organisation’s goals and a sense of shared values and aims (Cheney, 1982). Prinos and Manley (2023) argue that this type of organisational identification can be applied to anchor institutions’ employees as organisations in synergy with the city and communities.

- i. Plural ownership of the economy,
- ii. Making financial power work for local places,
- iii. Fair employment and just labour markets,
- iv. Progressive procurement of goods and services,
- v. Socially just use of land and property.

8. The Scottish Government’s five interlinked pillars of Community Wealth Building correspond to these principles: (a) Inclusive ownership; (b) Finance; (c) Workforce; (d) Spending; (e) Land and property.

1.3 Summary of Community Wealth Building concepts

9. A number of concepts, initiatives and terminologies and are frequently referred to in relation to Community Wealth Building. These are described in Table 1.

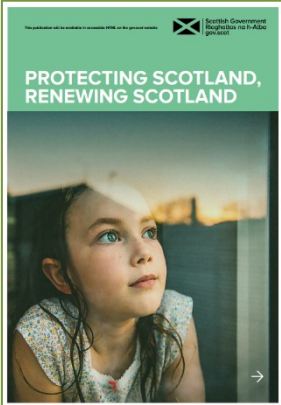
Table 1 CWB concepts, initiatives and terminologies

Community Wealth Building	Community Wealth Building is defined as a place-based approach to local economic development, which redirects wealth back into the local economy, and places control and benefits into the hands of local people.
Preston Model	The " Preston Model " is a term used to describe how Community Wealth Building has been adopted in Preston, a city in the north west of England, and the wider Lancashire area, by Preston City Council and other partner organisations.
CLES <u>Five core principles of Community Wealth Building</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plural ownership of the economy 2. Making financial power work for local places 3. Fair employment and just labour markets 4. Progressive procurement of goods and services 5. Socially just use of land and property (CLES, n.d.).
The Scottish Government’s five interlinked pillars of Community Wealth Building	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusive ownership 2. Finance 3. Workforce 4. Spending 5. Land and property
The Bute House Agreement	The Bute House Agreement, officially the Cooperation Agreement between the (Scottish National Party, SNP) Scottish Government and the Scottish Green Party Parliamentary Group, was the power-sharing agreement which was agreed in August 2021. It set out how the SNP Government and the Scottish Greens would work together and the appointment of Green Ministers. It was accompanied by a shared policy programme.

<p>LEADER</p>	<p>LEADER is a local development method which has been used by the EU for the last 30 years to engage local actors in the design and delivery of local development strategies and activities, decision-making and resource allocation. It is implemented by Local Action Groups which bring together public, private and third sector stakeholders. LEADER comes from the French acronym for "Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale", meaning 'Links between the rural economy and development actions'.</p>
<p>Five Community Wealth Building pilot areas in Scotland</p>	<p>The Scottish Government, working with local authorities and other partners, has supported five pilot areas to develop bespoke Community Wealth Building action plans, covering a range of actions across the five pillars of Community Wealth Building. The five areas are Clackmannanshire, Fife/Tay Cities, Glasgow City Region, South of Scotland and Western Isles.</p>
<p>Ayrshire Growth Deal</p>	<p>The Ayrshire Growth Deal is a partnership being driven forward by the Scottish Government, the UK Government and East, North and South Ayrshire Councils. Through adopting a Community Wealth Building approach, it is targeting co-ordinated investment throughout the region to stimulate growth, increase job opportunities and prosperity for Ayrshire, for Scotland and for the UK as a whole.</p>
<p>Community Wealth Building Consultation (2023)</p>	<p>The Scottish Government launched a consultation in January 2023 on Community Wealth Building legislation and the changes required to accelerate Community Wealth Building in Scotland, including the potential for new powers, abilities and duties for local authorities, public bodies, wider community planning partners, etc. The consultation was open until April 2023. An independent report summarising the consultation responses was published in October 2023.</p>
<p>Plunkett UK</p>	<p>Plunkett UK is a charity that supports people to set up and run a wide range of businesses which are owned by local communities, where members have equal and democratic control. At the start of 2023, Plunkett represented around 750 community-owned businesses in rural and urban areas throughout the UK, from shops and pubs through to woodlands, farms and fisheries.</p>
<p>Community Wealth Building in Rural and Island Scotland Roundtable, December 2021</p>	<p>In December 2021, Scottish Rural Action, InspirAlba and the David Hume Institute organised a roundtable which brought together experienced practitioners to discuss rural and island Community Wealth Building strategies and to explore how wealth building policy, particularly the Preston model adopted by the Scottish Government, may be leveraged to strengthen these strategies in rural and island locations. A summary report from the event is available online.</p>

2 The evolution of Community Wealth Building in Scottish policy and practice

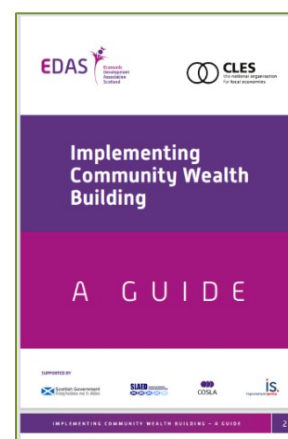
2.1 2020-2021: Community Wealth Building and wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic

10. Community Wealth Building first featured in the [Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2020-21](#), particularly in recognition of the need to rethink local economies and communities as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Programme contained new commitments around local supply chain development, 20-minute neighbourhoods and active travel, and emphasised the work already being done on Community Wealth Building to reorganise local economies and maximise local opportunities and resilience, ensuring that local people and businesses have a genuine stake in producing, owning, and enjoying the wealth they create.
- 
11. Central to the Scottish Government's approach at this time was a consideration of how the financial, land and property assets of major employers or anchor institutions in communities, whether they are public, private or third sector, can be used to support local economic opportunity, for example through increased local procurement, protecting and creating local jobs, and encouraging wider adoption of fair work practices. The Programme also emphasised that communities can be anchors too, through community land or development trusts for example, which it was noted played a key role in helping communities through the pandemic. There was a clear desire on the part of Scottish Government to harness the energy of communities to ensure that they are a core part of the approach to economic development in Scotland.
12. It is worth noting that these Community Wealth Building commitments followed on from Scotland joining the [Wellbeing Economy Governments network \(WEGo\)](#) (in 2018) in collaboration with New Zealand, Iceland, Finland, Canada, and Wales. Since 2021, [WEAll Scotland](#) has been one of a growing worldwide network of hubs that make up the [Wellbeing Economy Alliance](#).
13. In financial terms, the [Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2020-21](#) announced that, in addition to continuing the work with Ayrshire (who at the time had already secured £3 million for Community Wealth Building through their Regional Growth Deal), the Government would work with five additional areas to produce bespoke Community Wealth Building Action Plans in 2020-21: Clackmannanshire, South of Scotland, Glasgow City Region, Western Isles and Fife/Tay Cities. The Programme acknowledged that these plans would be different in different places, and that communities, public services and businesses should be involved in their design and delivery. The Programme also noted the work by the Scottish

Government and other stakeholders on community empowerment and land reform for example, which also supports community groups across Scotland to access resources and to participate more fully in local decision-making. Through these measures, the Government argued that more public sector spend would be circulated locally, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) would be supported to create additional, secure and well-paying jobs, and there would be more support for local businesses including around different business models (e.g. employee-owned enterprises, cooperatives and community ownership), maximising shared workspace access, and clearly signposting to available finance.

2.2 2021-2022 – A focus on legislation

14. [The Bute House Agreement](#) which came into effect in August 2021 (and ended in April 2024) was an agreement between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Green Party Parliamentary Group to work collaboratively. As part of this, a [Shared Policy Programme](#) was agreed which includes a commitment to develop a Community Wealth Building Bill focused on encouraging diverse and inclusive local economies, finance, land and ownership models. More specifically the Policy Programme stated that the Bill would include:
 - developing procurement practices to support local small and medium-sized enterprises and microbusinesses,
 - improving access to training and labour markets for disadvantaged communities and individuals,
 - encouraging public kitchens (including school canteens) to source more food from local businesses and organic producers,
 - and, where possible, to base public sector capital and revenue funding decisions on targeted social, economic and environmental outcomes.
15. A couple of months after this, and building on the work in the six pilot areas, the [Scottish Government's Covid Recovery Strategy: for a fairer future](#) (October 2021) included a commitment to work with all local authorities to create Community Wealth Building plans which set out objectives to protect and create good quality local employment opportunities as part of their wider recovery plans by August 2023.
16. Working in partnership with Scottish Government, the [Economic Development Association Scotland \(EDAS\)](#) has committed to further support Community Wealth Building initiatives through a range of workshops, peer support, information and materials, and overall support of anchor organisations (such as local authorities, health and social care bodies, further and higher education institutions and enterprise agencies) in their implementation processes. In 2023, EDAS published the '[Implementing Community Wealth Building: A Guide](#)' document, which goes through the steps required to develop a Community Wealth Building action plan, as well as the entire process of transition to this approach.



17. The Centre for Local Economic Strategies also have a [guide for Community Wealth Building](#), mainly for new councillors, providing a six-page overview of its main principles, why it is necessary, how it works, and where it is happening.
18. Reflecting the Bute House Agreement, the [Programme for Government 2021-22](#) contained a commitment to take forward a Community Wealth Building Bill, to enable more local communities and people to own, have a stake in, access and benefit from the wealth generated by the economy. The Bill would seek to augment the role of local authorities, health boards and other public sector anchor organisations in supporting local economic development and advancing a wellbeing economy. A [Community Wealth Building Bill Steering Group](#) was established to support this work, chaired by Tom Arthur MSP, Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth.
19. The Programme referred to a range of linked legislative reforms seeking to give communities greater power over their own future, including a review of the Community Empowerment Act, the Local Democracy Bill, and the Local Governance Review. The Programme also contained reference to various changes to the planning system to, amongst other things:
- focus more strongly on place-based outcomes,
 - support the concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods,
 - support enhanced community involvement in the planning system through stronger digital engagement.
20. The Programme also contained a commitment to establish a £20 million Rural Entrepreneur Fund to establish 2,000 new rural businesses and help build up rural economies (unfortunately, after some initial preparatory work, this Fund was not established).

2.3 2022-2023 - the National Strategy for Economic Transformation and Community Wealth Building consultation

21. In April 2022, the [National Strategy for Economic Transformation \(NSET\) was launched](#), which outlined the Scottish Government's vision and objectives to create a wellbeing economy in recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, and:

“...a society that is thriving across economic, social, and environmental dimensions, and that delivers prosperity for all of Scotland's people and places.”

22. Community Wealth Building was regarded as being the approach to enable the achievement of the strategy's objectives because it *“can deliver more and better jobs, business growth, community-owned assets and shorter supply chains creating greater resilience and*



supporting net zero ambitions.” The National Strategy for Economic Transformation outlined the government's intention to leverage public and private investments, among other measures, to generate new job opportunities, facilitate the expansion of local businesses, and empower communities by placing more assets in their hands. The Strategy also reinforced the commitment in the [2020-21 Programme for Government](#) to apply the learnings from Community Wealth Building activities in local and regional [pilot areas](#) in urban and rural Scotland.

23. The [Programme for Government 2022-23](#) reiterated the Government’s commitment to adopting and encouraging others to adopt Community Wealth Building principles in their work across Scotland, and committed the Government to launch a consultation on the Community Wealth Building legislation.

24. The [Community Wealth Building consultation paper](#) was published by the Scottish Government in January 2023. In his Ministerial Foreword, Tom Arthur MSP Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth, emphasised the need to put people and the environment at the core of economic planning. He argued that a wellbeing economy cannot be achieved through wealth redistribution but that the principles of a wellbeing economy need to be hard-wired into everything that is done to develop the economy and Community Wealth Building can help to achieve that. He goes on to argue (p3) that:

“The strategic Community Wealth Building approach is grounded in solid economic concepts and approaches. Crucially, Community Wealth Building is also a very practical model, and we are already deploying and moving forward with the model in Scotland. By considering new legislation on Community Wealth Building to bind and consolidate existing practice, we seek to give that work a strengthened platform from which we can deepen and accelerate delivery.”

25. Given recent worldwide crises, Mr Arthur argued that bold economic approaches are required in the long-term to realise sustainable and resilient wellbeing economies at local, regional, and national levels. The legislation introduced in the current Parliamentary session, he argued, is significant as it is part of a strategic approach to create a wellbeing economy, empower communities, and support local and regional economic development.

26. The consultation paper reiterated the important role of anchor institutions in leading the adoption of Community Wealth Building principles (for example in terms of their commissioning and purchasing decisions, their workforce and employment capacity, and creative and positive use of their facilities and land assets to bring about social, economic, or environmental change in a region). The paper acknowledged again that while the public sector may be the catalyst for Community Wealth Building activities in some areas, it is critical that communities, businesses and third sector organisations are collaborating too. The paper acknowledged that their involvement

may be especially important in rural areas and islands. It also emphasised the importance of taking a whole system approach to Community Wealth Building.

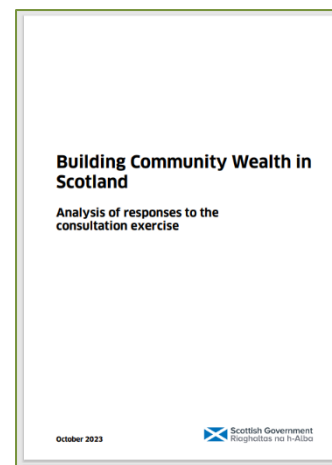
2.4 Responses to the consultation and recent developments

27. In the Scottish Government's 2023 consultation paper, the Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth described Community Wealth Building as:

“a central cog in our reform agenda which seeks to re-wire our economy for this generation and for future generations.”

28. The Scottish Government's Community Wealth Building consultation ran from January to May 2023 and [an independent analysis of responses to the consultation](#) (185 in total) was published in October 2023. The key points are summarised here.

29. A majority of respondents (63% of those answering the specific question) favoured an approach which combined a duty requiring Scottish Ministers and prescribed public sector bodies to embed the Community Wealth Building model of economic development into their corporate plans and wider strategies, with a duty requiring those public sector bodies statutorily obliged to be involved in community planning to produce a collective Community Wealth Building place-based strategy and action plan.



30. It was argued that this should contain specific actions across the five Community Wealth Building pillars to advance this model of economic development in the local authority area. It was noted that this approach would build on current arrangements in many areas but should also promote wider buy-in and collective action. It was felt that mandating public sector bodies to collaborate to produce a collective action plan may help embed the message that Community Wealth Building economic activity is the responsibility of all involved stakeholders. Moreover, through collaborative efforts it would be possible to enhance the effectiveness and reach of developed initiatives across all pillars. Some of the themes that emerged from the consultation mentioned inclusion of stakeholders, co-operation and partnership, transparency and accountability, guidance and implementation, complexity of legislation as well as the importance of the engagement and capacity building for successful implementation of the Community Wealth Building model.

31. Consultation findings indicated a number of core themes including the need for: clarity on stakeholders and their duties; cooperation and partnership; transparency and accountability; clear guidance; a reduction in legislative complexity; and engagement and capacity building across local authorities and public bodies as well as communities. These are described in more detail in Table 2.

Table 2 Emerging themes from the Consultation response analysis on Community Wealth Building³

Included stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authorities, Community Planning Partnerships and all local and regional community planning partners (including Health Boards, Health and Social Care Partnerships, Enterprise Agencies, Universities and Colleges, Community Councils, Third Sector Interfaces and Local Development Trusts)
Cooperation and partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlighted as essential for initiatives success Anchor institutions as key stakeholders in the process Improved collaboration and partnership Leadership from political and public sector is perceived to be critical
Transparency and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Essential for the future of Community Wealth Building Call for improved accountability from Ministers and public bodies Proposed suggestions include high-level Community Wealth Building statement and a Community Wealth Building Commission Reporting could use existing frameworks like local authorities' Corporate Performance Monitoring or and the National Performance Framework
Guidance and implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance for public bodies to meet the proposed duties Preference for statutory guidance to ensure consistency Non statutory approach for more flexibility in implementation
Legislative complexity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislative complexity: Current legislation landscape is complex and interconnected Potential for consolidation and simplification There is awareness of potential benefits of the Community Wealth Building for net zero and just transitions outcomes
Engagement and Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legitimacy and potential uptake of the Community Wealth Building model will depend on the meaningful engagement and active participation of community stakeholders Critical to engage disadvantaged communities and build capacity in local authorities and public bodies It is necessary to have access to different resources including training, education, and building capacity Respondents recognised the financial challenges that might affect availability of resources across sectors.

Source: [Scottish Government \(2023\)](#)

32. The consultation also asked questions about the Scottish Government's five Community Wealth Building pillars, and a number of themes were raised by respondents including the need to: review procurement frameworks and approaches; develop supplier capacity; achieve a commitment to fair work practices and paying at least the real Living Wage; review compulsory purchase powers; tackle vacant and derelict land; ensure alignment between Community Wealth Building and other land

³[Building Community Wealth in Scotland: consultation analysis - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

rights legislation; work towards an employee right to buy when a business is put up for sale; fund assessment criteria; review financing options, including progressive financing.

33. Community Wealth Building policy officials in the Scottish Government are continuing to work through the evidence submitted, including assessing the feasibility of various strategies and activities that were proposed.

34. The [2023 Policy Prospectus](#) published by former First Minister Humza Yousaf made only one mention of Community Wealth Building, but the approach featured in a number of debates within the Scottish Parliament in 2023, for example on [UK income inequality discussion](#) in February 2023, [National planning framework 4](#) in March 2023, [Scotland's finances and cost-of-living discussion](#) in April 2023, and [Tourism in Scotland](#) in June 2023.



35. John Swinney became Scotland's First Minister in May 2024 resulting in changes to the Cabinet Secretary and Ministerial portfolios. Having been appointed Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth Building in May 2021, and re-appointed as Minister for Community Wealth and Public Finance in May 2023, Tom Arthur MSP is now Minister for Employment and Investment. Community Wealth Building is no longer included in his portfolio title, although it remains one of his responsibilities under the theme of Investment and regeneration. It is also worth noting that the term 'wellbeing economy' has been lost with Kate Forbes becoming Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for the Economy and Gaelic. Mairi McAllan was formerly Cabinet Secretary for the Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy.

36. It is not yet clear how far a Community Wealth Building approach remains core to the Scottish Government's policy priorities and approach, but work is ongoing between the Scottish Government and local authorities, all of whom are adopting Community Wealth Building principles to a greater or lesser extent. The Scottish Government is also continuing to work to a timetable of this Parliamentary term for the Community Wealth Building Bill.

3 The evolution of Community Wealth Building in practice in Scotland

37. As set out in the [Programme for Government 2020-21](#), the Scottish Government provided support for five [Community Wealth Building pilot areas](#) (Clackmannanshire, Fife/Tay Cities, Glasgow City Region, South of Scotland, and Western Isles). Several potential actions were identified for the pilot areas (see Box 1), and each area developed a Community Wealth Building Action Plan (Table 3).

Box 1: Scottish Government (n.d.); Summary of actions in the Community Wealth Building Action Plans of the pilot areas

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING DELIVERABLES IN THE SCOTTISH PILOT AREAS:

- growing local supply chains
- supporting the creation of good fair work opportunities for local people
- promoting the Real Living Wage and wider fair work objectives
- bringing vacant and derelict land into more productive use
- using land as a tool to achieve net zero
- maximising the community benefits associated with procurement and developing local supply chains
- supporting local firms to take part in public procurement contracts.

38. Further to these pilot areas, the Scottish Government allocated £3 million to promote Community Wealth Building in Ayrshire through the [Ayrshire Growth Deal](#) (which builds on the work by North Ayrshire Council) based on [three core dimensions](#):

- i. Community Wealth Building Business Locality Officers,
- ii. Community Wealth Building Fund, and
- iii. Fair Work Ayrshire.



Table 3 Community Wealth Building Pilot Areas in Scotland

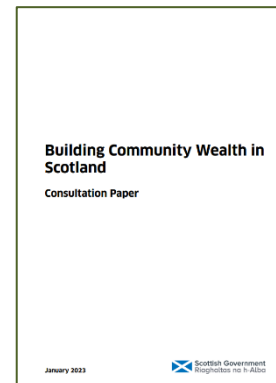
Pilot Area (Scotland)	Core Community Wealth Building Pillars	Community Wealth Building Actions
Clackmannanshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending • Employability • Inclusive Ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender Pay Gap and real Living Wage, ownership considerations in high street regeneration, growing local supply chains and a community benefits wish list.
Fife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending • Workforce • Land & Property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing local spend, delivering employability funding through a Community Wealth Building lens to support lone parents, deepening the role of community finance, and using land as a tool to achieve net zero. The learning will be shared with the wider Tay Cities region.
Glasgow City Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment • Land & Property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing vacant and derelict land into more productive use and pursuing sustainable procurement within the construction sector to develop benefits for Scottish firms with a securer pipeline for apprenticeships and more local jobs. Glasgow City Region are now developing plans to advance Community Wealth Building across all five pillars of the approach
South of Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land & Property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporating Community Wealth Building across its regional economic strategy and South of Scotland Enterprise. Working with partners to take a deep dive focus on the role of housing sector in developing South of Scotland supply chains, particularly in green retrofitting of housing stock.
Western Isles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment • Land & Property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing awareness and application of land rights and responsibilities for greener and more locally productive use and deepening the links between employability programmes and local skills needs, in addition to activity across other Community Wealth Building pillars.

Source: as set out in the Programme for Government 2020-21, author's illustration

39. In 2024, the SRUC research team will carry out further research to review the activities undertaken in each of these six areas and beyond, the barriers encountered and the monitoring and evaluation work that has been undertaken, within a wider context of ongoing work across Scotland to advance Community Wealth Building principles.

4 Reflecting on Community Wealth Building in Scotland's rural and island communities

40. The six pilot projects include both rural and urban local authority areas, but outwith these, there are many examples of local projects across urban, rural and coastal communities, led by the public sector, businesses, third sector organisations, and local communities that display some, if not all, Community Wealth Building principles. Some of these are listed in the [2023 Community Wealth Building consultation document published by the Scottish Government](#), for example;



- the regeneration of [Midsteeple Quarter in Dumfries](#),
- [West Harris Community Trust](#),
- Scotland's growing number of employee-owned businesses such as [Jerba Campervans](#) in East Lothian and [Collective Architecture](#) in Glasgow,
- examples of innovative procurement practice such as the [Supplier Development Programme](#), [Perth and Kinross Council's 'Community Benefits Wish List'](#) and [East Ayrshire Council's partnership with Mossgiel Farm](#).



41. In their 2023 [consultation](#) the Scottish Government recognised the particular importance of communities, businesses (including microbusinesses) and third sector organisations to achieving Community Wealth Building in rural and island locations. They further noted that a number of rural areas and islands are leading the development of these types of initiatives, including through community-led activity and the start-up and development of microbusinesses supporting the retention of wealth in their local areas.

42. In December 2021, Scottish Rural Action held a [practitioner roundtable](#) on Community Wealth Building bringing together a range of experienced individuals⁴ to discuss how rural and island wealth strategies and wealth building policy (particularly the Preston model⁵) can be adapted to Scotland. This roundtable discussed the traditional methods of wealth creation in rural and island Scotland, including small enterprises, community involvement through formal and informal volunteering, cultural preservation, crofting, traveller customs, flexible work arrangements, and diverse part-time employment, including self-employment. The discussion

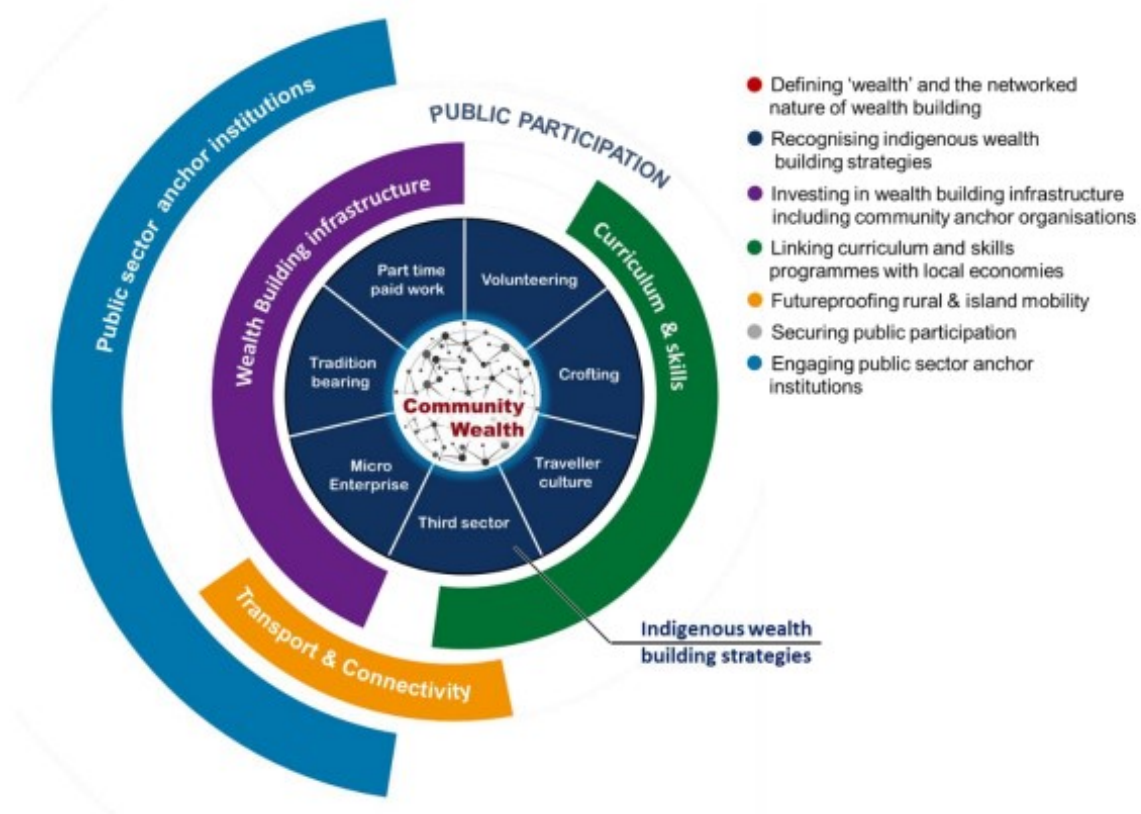
⁴ Scottish Rural Action, David Hume Institute, Mull & Iona Community Trust, New Cumnock Development Trust, InspirAlba, Shelagh Young Consulting, ReTweed, SENScot, Cairngorms National Park, GrowBiz Scotland, Angus Campbell Ltd., Institute of Directors, WEAll Scotland

⁵ [What is Preston Model? - Preston City Council](#)

acknowledged that these localised ways of living and working have not just upheld communities but have also fostered their growth across centuries.

43. One important recommendation from the roundtable participants was to reconfigure the (urban-based) *Preston model of Community Wealth Building* to better connect anchor institutions with community-led, small-scale strategies (see Figure 1). Participants argued that, in rural and island communities, wealth creation thrives through robust local networks of individuals and small-scale organisations, which serve to enhance community resilience and drive innovation. This is also the core argument used by [McAreavey \(2022\)](#) on community resilience and anchor institutions in rural communities in England.
44. Roundtable participants argued that enterprises in rural and island locations tend to perform both functions (enhancing resilience and generating innovation) out of necessity. This might be through necessity to maintain the business, or to tackle a particular local challenge (e.g. withdrawal of an element of public service provision). Participants suggested a new perspective on 'wealth' is needed that emphasises longer-term social and environmental outcomes, not just economic outcomes. They argued that sustainability, resilience, and overall wellbeing should be prioritised over economic growth.


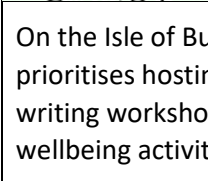

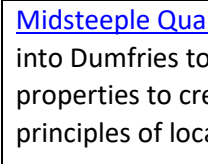
Figure 1 Adaptation of Preston's Community Wealth Building model for rural and island communities



Source: [Report from SRA practitioner roundtable, December 2021](#)

45. In a rural and island context, roundtable participants noted that local networks are often formed by nurturing traditional wealth-building methods such as crofting, volunteering, as well as small-scale private, social, and community-based micro-businesses, alongside the efforts of local third-sector organisations. However, due to their small scale, there is a lack of comprehensive data on these strategies, making it challenging to fully monitor and evaluate their impact, that can result in undervaluation and negative perceptions regarding achievements. Importantly, roundtable participants argued that to fully realise the Scottish Government's vision of implementing a Community Wealth Building framework into national economic policy, these activities in rural and island contexts must be explicitly acknowledged and actively supported.
46. The role of these organisations and activities in 'delivering' key policy agendas was recognised by the Scottish Government in their [consultation paper](#), where it noted that Community Wealth Building can support population retention and growth in areas facing depopulation.
47. The [Plunkett Foundation](#) provided examples of Community Wealth Building in action, highlighted in Table 4. These initiatives demonstrate how community-driven businesses - a form of 'anchor institution' - contribute to local economies and address essential community needs and critical issues like depopulation, through providing services and the creation of jobs and community 'gathering spots'. Importantly the role of anchor institutions in tackling depopulation is recognised in [Scotland's Population Strategy](#) (2021).
48. Based on Scottish Rural Action's [2021 roundtable report](#), local wealth-building infrastructure includes: (i) community anchor institutions (whose role is often to coordinate public involvement in activities that enhance the social, environmental, and economic wellbeing of specific localities); (ii) enterprise support organisations; and (iii) shared facilities and resources (this might include mobile abattoirs, waste processing units and community service centres). These facilities and resources enable network functions (such as supporting food production and trade, care provision or cultural heritage activities) and support local and viable service provisioning for multiple stakeholders.
49. As indicated in these examples (Table 4), wealth-building infrastructure plays a crucial role in supporting informal, locally based wealth-building strategies by fostering resilience within networks and facilitating meaningful engagement among network stakeholders and public sector anchor institutions.

Table 4 Community Wealth Building in Practice

	<p>The Red Lion in Culross, Fife was acquired by 270 local shareholders in 2022 after the original owners retired. Serving as a social hub in a small rural community, it's now the largest local employer, with 15-20 staff, including young locals, and there are plans for future enhancements such as bike racks and charging points.</p>
	<p>On the Isle of Bute, the community-owned Anchor Tavern prioritises hosting events desired by locals, from music sessions to writing workshops, collaborating with local groups to promote wellbeing activities.</p>
	<p>In Invermoriston in Highland, the reopened village shop, managed by the community, offers both essential items and showcases local crafts for visitors. It also aims to reduce single-use plastic through a refill service.</p>
	<p>Midsteeples Quarter is a community benefit society breathing new life into Dumfries town centre by redeveloping empty High Street properties to create a new neighbourhood with a mix of uses built on principles of local prosperity and wellbeing</p>

Source: [Midsteeples Quarter](#) (2018) and [Plunkett Foundation](#) (2022)

50. Investing in 'wealth infrastructure', in ways which are appropriate to the local context, therefore becomes essential for public sector anchor institutions to effectively implement the four main elements of the Preston model⁶: (i) Wealth that's there; (ii) Workforce; (iii) Land, Property and Investments; (iv) Economic democracy. For example, aligning local curriculum and skills development programmes with the demands of the local economy can be particularly important for fostering Community Wealth Building in rural and island areas where education and training opportunities may be relatively limited.

- There are examples of higher education institutes in Scotland aligning themselves with the needs of their local economies to equip students with skills relevant to these needs; this activity may not be termed Community Wealth Building, but it certainly displays some of its principles. Examples include the University of the Highlands and Islands and its network of campuses across the Highlands and Islands region, SRUC with its campuses across Scotland and its network of local consultancy offices, and urban-based institutions such as Glasgow University, Heriot-Watt University and University of the West of Scotland that all have satellite campuses in rural locations. These types of campuses can create opportunities for more accessible and affordable education, thereby supporting local population retention and increased employment opportunities. All these institutions also have the potential to serve – and some already do serve – as anchors in their local communities through emphasising local procurement for

⁶ [What is Preston Model? - Preston City Council](#)

example, or as community hubs for a wide range of activities. However, consolidation within the academic sector can also impact on local outreach in communities⁷.

51. Scottish Rural Action's [2021 Roundtable Report](#) notes a number of other important issues in relation to Community Wealth Building in rural and island contexts:

- First, that these activities (in all kinds of geographical locations) require collaborative, holistic and place-based thinking that cut across all sectors (including businesses, business support and education and training provision, digital and physical connectivity, housing, demography, poverty, and social exclusion).
- Second, this kind of collaborative working requires good connectivity, whether physical or digital. However, infrastructure can be lacking, or completely absent, in rural and island locations (such as lack of public transport or high-quality broadband that would allow working from home). Improvements in this infrastructure requires coordination between multiple 'layers' of policy from both UK and Scottish Government and from local authorities, in relation to transport, spatial planning, economic policies etc.
- Third, active public participation is also critical to successful Community Wealth Building, but effective engagement with all demographic groups (including 'marginalised groups') requires investment. This investment at a local level could be channelled through anchor organisations.
- A fourth crucial aspect is the need to enhance transparency and accountability within public sector boards and strategic groups, including those of anchor institutions, to ensure that a range of diverse voices can be heard in decision-making.
- Finally, the roundtable participants argued that exploring Scotland's Community Led Local Development network (formerly the LEADER network) as a platform for rural and island wealth building policies at the regional level is crucial.

52. Table 5 provides more detail on the perspectives of SRA roundtable participants on the different elements of the Preston model of Community Wealth Building for rural and island Scotland.

⁷ See for example UHI restructuring in Shetland ([No Redundance | EIS FELA](#)) and SRUC's restructuring around Elmwood campus in Fife ([Elmwood College: SRUC principal says college is 'integral' to its future plans \(fifetoday.co.uk\)](#))

Table 5 Roundtable participants' views on the different elements of the Preston model of Community Wealth Building and rural and island communities

Five pillars of the Preston model	Roundtable participants perspective
Fair Employment and Just Labour Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment practices need to align with and support local wealth-building strategies. This includes enhancing access to volunteering, facilitating remote work options, and establishing safeguards for seasonal workforces. • Balancing attention between promoting good employment practices within micro-enterprises, often the primary employment source in rural or island communities and enhancing employment practices across public sector anchor institutions. • A critical focus of Pillar 1 efforts should be on ensuring a just transition, especially for organisations in sectors or regions facing adverse impacts, by providing support to manage workforce and client-base challenges. This approach aims to address potential negative consequences for affected communities during transitions.
Plural Ownership of the Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive review of existing systems, from HMRC procedures to insurance requirements, is necessary to create a conducive environment for the flourishing of micro-businesses. • Exploring democratic mechanisms like participatory budgeting within the framework of Community Wealth Building to ensure diverse ownership of wealth generated and distributed under Pillar 3.
Making Financial Wealth Work Locally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beyond pension funds, redirecting other public funds like Self-Directed Support, tourism taxes, and Crown Estate Scotland rents, could significantly support community wealth initiatives in rural and island Scotland. Priority sectors benefiting from additional funding could include childcare and food production. • Promoting wider adoption of Community Shares and Community Bonds as alternative investment models. • Encouraging flexible, longer-term funding or investment programmes that offer sustained support over multiple years.
Progressive Procurement of Goods and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising that investing in wealth-building infrastructure is crucial to enable micro-businesses to engage effectively in procurement processes.
Socially Just Use of Land and Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging disparities between communities with resources (e.g., Development Officers or income from renewables) and those lacking such resources and advocating for additional support and investment to assist struggling communities in self-organisation.

Source: [Report from SRA's practitioner roundtable \(2021\)](#)

5 Conclusions

53. This paper has reviewed the evolution of Community Wealth Building policy and practice in Scotland. The Bute House Agreement came to an end in April 2024 and the Shared Policy Programme that was agreed as part of this contained the commitment to develop a Community Wealth Building Bill.
54. Despite the ending of this Agreement, and the changes to Cabinet Secretary / Ministerial portfolios in May 2024, Community Wealth Building legislation is still planned to pass through the Scottish Parliament in this current Parliamentary term (i.e. before 2026). The Scottish Government's 2023 consultation revealed a considerable amount of support for Community Wealth Building principles and activities across different sectors. The need for genuine partnership working, fostering collaboration and trust, capacity-building and leadership was stressed by consultation respondents as was the need to simplify the current legislative framework and align Community Wealth Building to environmental and social objectives.
55. In terms of Community Wealth Building in a rural context, it has been argued that these approaches have been a fundamental part of rural and island communities for a long time, often informally and not termed as such, including through activities such as crofting, volunteering, private, social, and community micro-enterprises, along with the activities of local third sector organisations, which play vital roles in rural communities. By recognising and facilitating these 'grassroots' efforts, policymakers can foster inclusive economic development and empower rural communities to thrive.
56. Drawing from urban experiences in the United States and England (e.g. [Community Wealth Building: The Chicago Way](#), [WealthWorks](#) in rural Oregon and [Preston Model](#) in the UK), Community Wealth Building has gained support at both national and local levels.
57. Community Wealth Building activity in Scotland reflects a shift in thinking around how economic development and wealth generation can take place in Scotland's communities – providing the foundations towards greater local community empowerment and fostering economic resilience. However, it is worth noting that some of the elements of Community Wealth Building have been present in many rural and island communities for a long time. The shift also reflects broader national policy priorities around devolving power and responsibilities to communities, evident in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 for example, and in recent land reform legislation.
58. Despite changes in Ministerial portfolios since John Swinney was appointed First Minister in May 2024, the Community Wealth Building Bill (if progressed) can provide

the supportive legislative framework that is needed, including statutory duties on some organisations, for enhanced Community Wealth Building activities in future.

6 Next Steps

59. This is the second report in this series on Community Wealth Building. A third report will examine learning from international examples of Community Wealth Building, drawing on evidence from Australia, Europe, Africa and North America. While these activities are taking place in different political and policy contexts, and take a variety of different forms, there is the potential for Scotland and its rural and island communities to learn from what is working well (and not so well) and drive change and grow wealth from within.
60. Following the international evidence review which will be available later in 2024, the NISRIE team will be undertaking primary data collection within the pilot areas to understand their activities, and with Community Wealth Building work outwith these areas, to learn more about other activities undertaken and the learning from them. This will help support the growing evidence base on Community Wealth Building and help inform appropriate mechanisms to monitor and evaluate its success.



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The 5-year NISRIE project is funded through the Rural Economy topic, within the Rural Futures Theme of the [Scottish Government's 2022-2027 Strategic Research Programme](#) on environment, natural resources and agriculture that is managed by the **Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services Division**.



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