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Community land ownership and community resilience

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Summary



1. This research was carried out to examine the links between community ownership of land and development of associated assets, and the resilience of those communities. Seventeen community land trusts were visited in May 2011 to gather their responses to six key questions.
2. Community land trusts own and manage the land they have purchased from private landlords, public sector bodies or Government; they also develop the associated assets. Their focus is on long-term sustainability of the community and its land for future generations. Land owned and managed by Community Land Scotland members covers half a million acres, or 200,000 hectares. The oldest is the Stornoway Trust (1923), the youngest is West Harris Crofting Trust (2010), with four communities currently seeking to buy the land.
3. Communities buy the land they live on because they see land as the foundation on which all other developments sit. Ownership leads directly to the development of: private enterprise, investment due to security of tenure, affordable housing for rent and purchase, renewable energy schemes, infrastructure development, as well as ongoing estate management. This combination supports increased population and school numbers. The emphasis is on long-term stewardship, investment and growth.
4. Community land trusts are primarily volunteer run, and some have paid development officers. Boards are made up of entirely local, or a combination of local and external, people.
5. Challenges depend on stage in the land-purchase cycle (pre-purchase, the first 1-5 years post-purchase, and beyond 5 years) and to some extent on population numbers, which range from 23 to 11,000. Capability to address these challenges comes from both the local community, and through their connections with those beyond their locality.
6. Trusts address challenges through: maintaining engagement with the community; community involvement on the Board; spreading the workload; employment of staff rather than total reliance on volunteer input; and generation of revenue streams to allow for further investment.
7. Given the large scale of community land purchase, communities identify the need for training, guidance and support, to complement their own skills and capacities as they take forward the purchase and subsequent development of the land and its assets. They see localised decision-making as critical, since it means that communities are proactive rather than simply reactive. They identify specific mechanisms that can enhance their sustainability. They point to the importance of Community Land Scotland in lobbying and communicating evidence at national, strategic levels.
8. There is consensus across all community land trusts that the Scottish Land Fund (SLF) must be reinstated. The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 creates the right to buy. The SLF creates the financial means to buy. They specify particular components of the SLF that need to be improved for it to be more workable. They also identify specific legislative requirements that they feel must be addressed, including the transfer of public assets to communities at below market value.
9. The study evidence shows that: resilience can be built and is not only a characteristic of a few communities; resilience is multi-scale – a combination of individual, group, community and external connections; resilience is achieved through deliberate actions or processes, as well as through unplanned decisions or events; communities believe localism is appropriate with associated support and training mechanisms.
10. The Scottish Government is committed to establishing resilient communities (National Performance Framework, Outcome 11). Evidence from the research shows that community land trusts are delivering that brief. Therefore, the potential reform of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, and reinstatement of the Scottish Land Fund (as set out in the SNP Manifesto), become more critical since they are not only relevant to land purchase and management, but linked with the ongoing resilience of Scotland's wider rural communities.



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Fearann fo shealbh na coimhearsnachd agus coimhearsnachdan seasmhach

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Geàrr-chunntas

1. Chaidh an rannsachadh seo a dhèanamh gus sùil a thoirt air a' bhuaidh th' aige air coimhearsnachdan agus cho làidir agus a tha iad nuair a tha sealbh aca air fearann, agus a' bhuaidh a th' aig mar a nì iad leasachadh air an fhearann agus an stòras a tha na lùib. Thadhail sinn air 17 urrasan fearann coimhearsnachd sa Chèitean 2011 gus am freagairtean a thional a thaobh sia prìomh cheistean.
2. Tha stiùir is sealbh aig urrasan fearann coimhearsnachd air fearann a cheannaich iad bho uachdaran prìobhaideach, buidhnean bhon roinn phoblaich no bhon Riaghaltas; agus bidh iad a' leasachadh na cuid stòrais a thàinig leis an fhearann. Tha e na phrìomh amas dhaibh gun seas agus gum mair a' choimhearsnachd agus am fearann ùine fhada a chum maith nan ginealaichean a thig às an dèidh. Tha leth-mhillean acair, no 200,000 heactair, fo stiùir is fo shealbh choimhearsnachdan aig a bheil ballrachd ann am Fearann Coimhearsnachd na h-Alba. 'S e an t-urras as sine, Urras Steòrnabhaigh (1923), agus 's e am fear as ùire, Urras Croitearachd Taobh Siar na Hearadh (2010), agus tha ceithir coimhearsnachdan a' coimhead ri fearann a cheannach an-dràsta.
3. Bidh coimhearsnachdan a' ceannach an fhearainn air a bheil iad a' fuireach air sgàth 's gu bheil iad a' coimhead air fearann mar bhun-stèidh air am bithear a' togail gach nì eile a shoirbhicheas. Le sealbh air fearann thig: iomairtean prìobhaideach, airgead ga thasgadh seach gu bheil am fearann fo shealbh tèarainte, taighean air mhàl no rin ceannach aig prìs reusanta, iomairtean cumhachd ath-nuadhachail, leasachaidhean air a' bhun-structair, agus riaghladh cunbhalach airson na h-oighreachd. Bidh seo uile a' cur ri àireamh-sluaigh nas àirde agus àireamhan nas àirde san sgoil. Thathar a' cur cuideam air stiùbhardachd, tasgadh is fàs thar ùine fhada.
4. Gu h-àbhaisteach 's iad luchd saor-thoileach a tha a' ruith urrasan fearann coimhearsnachd, ach bidh oifigearan leasachaidh a gheibh tuarasdal aig feadhainn. Air cuid de bhùird, chan fhaighear ach muinntir an àite, air feadhainn eile gheibhear measgachadh de dhaoine bhon sgìre agus daoine bhon taobh a-muigh.
5. A thaobh dùbhlain, tha e an crochadh air dè an ìre aig a bheil gach coimhearsnachd ann a bhith a' ceannach an fhearainn (mus ceannaich iad e, a' chiad 1-5 bliadhna às dèidh dhaibh a cheannach, barrachd is còig bliadhna bhon a cheannaich iad e). Agus tha e an crochadh air àireamh an t-sluaigh, a tha a' dol bho 23 gu 11,000. Tha an comas a th' aca aghaidh a chur ris an dùbhlain sin ri linn oidhirpean na coimhearsnachd agus cheanglaichean a th' aca ri daoine bhon taobh a-muigh.
6. Gus dèiligeadh ri dùbhlain bidh urrasan: a' dèanamh coluadair ris a' choimhearsnachd; a' toirt àite do bhuill den choimhearsnachd air a' Bhòrd; a' roinn na h-obrach; a' fastadh luchd-obrach an àite a bhith gu tur an urra ri luchd saor-thoileach; a' cruthachadh shruthan airtidh gus an urrainnear tuilleadh ionmhais a thasgadh.
7. Thig obair mhòr is uallach le bhith a' ceannach fearann coimhearsnachd, agus mar sin bidh coimhearsnachdan a' comharrachadh mar a tha feum aca air trèanadh, stiùireadh is taic, a chuireas ris na sgilean is comasan aca fhèin, agus iad a' ceannach agus an uair sin a' leasachadh an fhearainn agus a chuid stòrais. Tha e deatamach dhaibh gur ann sa choimhearsnachd fhèin a nìthear co-dhùnaidhean, oir an uair sin tha a' choimhearsnachd a' stiùireadh ghnòthaichean seach dìreach a' dol leis an t-sruth. Bidh iad ag ainmeachadh innleachdan sònraichte a bheir piseach air seasmhachd na coimhearsnachd. Tha iad ag innse cho cudromach agus a tha Fearann Coimhearsnachd na h-Alba a thaobh a bhith ag iomairt agus a' cur fianais fa chomhair dhaoine aig ìre nàiseanta agus ìre ro-innleachdail.
8. Tha làn-aonta ann am measg nan urrasan fearann coimhearsnachd gum feumar Maoin Fearann na h-Alba (SLF) a stèidheachadh às ùr. Tha Achd Ath-leasachadh an Fhearainn (Alba) 2003 a' toirt dhuinn a' chòir gus fearann a cheannach. Tha an SLF a' toirt dhuinn an comas ionmhasail sin a dhèanamh. Tha iad a' comharrachadh phàirtean sònraichte den SLF a dh'fheumas a bhith air an leasachadh gus an obraich e nas fheàrr. Tha iad cuideachd a' comharrachadh ceistean laghail sònraichte ris am feumar coimhead, nam measg, a' reic stòrais phoblach ri coimhearsnachdan aig prìs a tha nas lugha na luach a' mhargaidh.
9. Tha toraidhean an rannsachaidh a' sealltainn: gun gabh neart no spionnadh a chruthachadh agus nach e dìreach nì a th' ann mar phàirt de nàdar chuid a choimhearsnachdan; thig spionnadh à iomadh tobar – measgachadh de cheanglaichean eadar daoine fa leth, buidhnean, a' choimhearsnachd agus daoine bhon taobh a-muigh; thig spionnadh tro oidhirpean is gnìomhan a dh'aona-ghnòthach, a thuilleadh air tachartasan is co-dhùnaidhean ris nach robh dùil; tha coimhearsnachdan den bheachd gu bheil e iomchaidh gum bi a' choimhearsnachd fhèin aig cridhe na h-obrach le taic is trèanadh dha rèir.
10. Tha e na amas do Riaghaltas na h-Alba coimhearsnachdan seasmhach a stèidheachadh (Am Frèam Coileanaidh Nàiseanta, Buil 11). Tha toraidhean an rannsachaidh a' sealltainn gu bheil urrasan fearann coimhearsnachd a' soirbheachadh mu choinneimh an amais sin. Mar sin, 's ann nas riata na buileach a tha na còmhraidhean mu mar a dh'fhaodar Achd Ath-leasachadh an Fhearainn (Alba) 2003 a dheasachadh às ùr, agus oidhirpean gus Maoin Fearann na h-Alba a stèidheachadh às ùr (mar a bha Manifesto Pàrtaidh Nàiseanta na h-Alba a' gealltainn). Chan e a-mhàin gu bheil iad a' bualadh air mar a thathar a' ceannach agus a' riaghladh fearann, ach cuideachd tha buaidh aig na nìthean seo air cho seasmhach agus a tha coimhearsnachdan dùthchail na h-Alba.

