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# Community Land Scotland ✨

## Manifesto for People, Place and Power

November 2025

# Table of Content

Key asks for the 2026 election.....	03
Introduction.....	04
Land reform is the bedrock of this manifesto.....	05
A bold and ambitious land reform agenda.....	06
Priority Outcome 1: Strengthened local communities.....	09
Priority Outcome 2: Local economic transformation.....	12
Priority Outcome 3: Solving the housing crisis and reversing depopulation.....	15
Priority Outcome 4: Communities leading the response to the climate and biodiversity crises.....	18
Background.....	21



The 2026 Scottish Parliamentary election comes at a crucial moment. Scotland is facing multiple and overlapping crises: housing shortages and depopulation, climate breakdown, biodiversity loss, a cost-of-living emergency, deepening inequality and rising political disillusionment increasingly threaten the fabric of our society. Doing more of the same will not deliver change at the speed or scale that we need.

This election is a chance to take bold steps to address these issues. The best answers and solutions often come from the communities themselves. With revitalised democracy rooted in communities, people can have real ownership of land and resources.

They can build affordable homes, generate clean energy, restore nature and support thriving local economies.

Strengthening community ownership and control is not just a fair approach; it is the key to putting Scotland's future in the hands of its people and ensuring a more equitable and sustainable future.

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1. This proposal was developed by South of Scotland Community Housing.

## KEY ASKS FOR THE 2026 ELECTION:

- 1 A national target for community ownership**  
*Commit to 10% of Scotland being in community ownership by the end of the next Parliament. Deliver this through a clear plan to expand community landownership and reduce the concentration of private landownership — including a new Land Reform Bill introducing a meaningful Public Interest Test on all large-scale ownership and fair taxation to deliver land reform outcomes.*
- 2 Modernised Community Right to Buy legislation**  
*Refresh the Community Right to Buy legislation to reflect today's ambitious community landscape and changing land market, implementing the recommendations of the 2025/26 review.*
- 3 A Scottish Community Wealth Fund**  
*Establish a national fund, seeded by new benefit payments from renewables, storage, and transmission developments, to ensure all of Scotland's communities share in the renewable energy revolution.*
- 4 A stronger Scottish Land Fund**  
*Strengthen the Scottish Land Fund with a £25 million commitment by the end of Parliament, including a ringfenced allocation for land acquisition — maintaining the focus on diversifying ownership and realising its transformational potential.*
- 5 A national Community Led Housing Fund**  
*Reconfigure the Rural & Islands Housing Funds into a national Community-Led Housing (CLH) Fund with a budget of £55 million to be spent by the end of this next Parliament. A ring-fenced amount should be reserved for fragile, rural and island communities. Eligibility for the new CLH Fund should mirror the criteria already in use for the Scottish Land Fund, widening access to affordable housing delivery to all communities.<sup>1</sup>*

## Framing Our Priorities ✨

Community Land Scotland's proposals for the 2026 party manifestos tackle direct issues of land reform and community ownership, as well as related sectors which help support resilient and vibrant communities across the country.

*We strongly believe that land reform is for **all** of Scotland.*



Concentrated landownership, underused land, and barriers to community-led development exist everywhere. Our manifesto integrates urban and rural issues to highlight that policies must consider and strengthen all communities across Scotland.

In 2024, Community Land Scotland published the Perth Declaration on behalf of our Members, providing a collective vision for what is needed to create a flourishing country through community landownership by 2034. The priorities set out in the Perth Declaration by our members are built upon in this manifesto. It focuses on four key priority outcomes for communities, all of which are supported by the need for a bold and transformative land reform agenda.



*Rosemount Development Trust (Royston, Glasgow)*

## Land reform is the bedrock of this manifesto \*

It is essential to delivering transformational action across Scotland's most pressing challenges and achieving four key outcomes:



1

### ***Strengthened local communities***

Removing barriers to community agency, placing more power and resources in community hands, and rebuilding trust in democracy.



2

### ***Local economic transformation***

Creating inclusive growth, driving community wealth building, and supporting long-term local economic resilience.



3

### ***Tackling the housing crisis and reversing depopulation***

Enabling community-led housing and infrastructure that respond to local needs and aspirations.



4

### ***Communities leading the response to the climate and nature crises***

Ensuring a just transition to net zero and a green recovery that serves both people and planet.

Together, these outcomes set out a bold and deliverable agenda for a fairer, more sustainable Scotland — one where communities have the tools, resources, and rights they need to flourish.



## A bold and ambitious land reform agenda ✨

Land is a vital and finite resource which is central to our economy, environment, culture and wellbeing. However, since 2012 land ownership in Scotland is becoming even further concentrated with 421 landowners now owning 50% of private rural land.<sup>2</sup>

This archaic pattern of landownership has resulted in vast amounts of land lying underused or managed in ways that do not serve pressing public priorities. Simultaneously, soaring land prices are putting ownership further out of reach for communities and ordinary people, driving private profit rather than sustainable development.

Diversifying who owns and therefore controls land is essential to creating a fairer and more resilient Scotland. Tackling affordability of land and opening access to more people and communities to own land will ensure wealth is retained in local areas where it is generated and help to combat the multiple crises of climate, biodiversity, housing and growing inequality.

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2. [Who Owns Scotlands 2024 - Land Matters](#)

Although more communities are purchasing assets, the total area of land in community ownership has plateaued since 2017, as it has become increasingly difficult for communities to acquire larger landholdings.

Public opinion strongly supports change: independent research by the Diffley Partnership has shown that

*80% of Scots believe the Scottish Government should do more to encourage community ownership.*

*78% of Scots support requiring large landowners to meet climate and nature targets.*

*67% back a land tax for large estates and 59% agreed Scotland would benefit from more diverse land ownership.<sup>3</sup>*

Bolder reform is needed of the way that land is owned, used and managed. The following proposals represent a bold and ambitious vision for land reform in Scotland:

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3. [Land Reform: What Scotland Wants](#)

**\* 10% of Scotland to be community owned by the end of the Parliament**, delivered by a clear plan to significantly increase community landownership and reduce the concentration of private landownership in Scotland – including a Land Reform Bill with a meaningful Public Interest Test on all landownership and targeted taxation to deliver land reform outcomes.

**\* Embedding community ownership as an integral part of the National Performance Framework.**

**\* Modernising community right to buy and crofting right to buy** implementing the findings of the 2025/26 review, to reflect the more ambitious community landscape and changes in the land market.

**\* Implement the findings of the Compulsory Purchase Order review**, including introducing Compulsory Sale Order powers to force change on vacant and derelict sites, including underused landholdings on urban high streets that consistently fail to deliver the public interest.

**\* A Scottish Land Commission led 10-year strategy for land reform** using the ideas and perspectives gathered through the ScotLand Futures Initiative.

**\* Establishment of a national Land Information Service** to systematically collect and manage data on landownership and land use, with a clear goal of producing a Land Cadastre. This should be supported by a clear government target date for completion of the register and specific triggers to accelerate first registration of all other lands.

**\* Completion of the land valuation roll** with the stated purpose of introducing a form of land value taxation.

**\* Increased creation of new crofts** on community, public and private land to build more communities and see more people living and working on the land.

## PRIORITY OUTCOME 1: Strengthened local communities



As inequality and political disillusionment rise, the incoming government needs to empower communities to control land and local development. This shift can help rebuild trust and create lasting change. Scotland's future will depend on the strength of its local communities.

To meaningfully implement Community Wealth Building (CWB) principles, which the current Scottish Government have supported, people must have control and actively participate in local action. The most meaningful and lasting changes often happen at the community level across all policy areas.

Scotland's communities are creative, ambitious and eager to take part in local decision-making and grasp opportunities. Across Scotland, there are communities embarking on transformational projects that have delivered lasting social, economic and environmental change. From strengthening and celebrating Gaelic culture and language, to developing renewable energy projects or building affordable homes for local use. These successes demonstrate what people can achieve when they have the tools to shape their surroundings.



*Kinning Park Complex (Kinning Park, Glasgow)*



*To build on this momentum, we need to change how communities receive support and resource to make meaningful local action more effective.*

A bottom-up approach, further incorporating principles of participative democracy, will give communities more power in decision-making. It can also provide stable, long-term funding, access to support services that build skills and capacity, and clear legislative pathways to take on and deliver ambitious projects. Stronger communities rely on stronger partnerships.

Communities should not replace core public services or be left with unsustainable liabilities. Community action should enhance public provision. We need to recognise the different but complementary roles of local authorities and communities. Together, they can achieve more than either can alone.

The following actions would allow Scottish communities to grow in an inclusive and sustainable way by giving them more control and influence over their local area.

## Community Leadership

- \* **Enable communities to take a stronger leadership role** in shaping their places through enhanced investment into capacity building, education and knowledge building, while improving collaboration with local authorities and regional partnerships.
- \* **Encourage new forms of joint venture** between communities, public agencies, and the private sector for investment purposes, ensuring that where public or community owned assets are involved, all income and returns from investments benefit those communities.
- \* **Support capacity building in communities** through greater resources, training, and direct support for community groups in areas of high deprivation to navigate complex asset transfer and right-to-buy processes.
- \* **Mandate and support property teams** from local authorities and other public bodies to identify and transfer sustainable unused land to communities to provide local growing opportunities, including collective growing and sites that support Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises for urban, peri-urban and commercial growing, such as market gardens.<sup>4</sup>

## Legislative change

- \* **Strengthen the Scottish Land Fund** to ensure it remains the engine of land reform, keeping pace with soaring land prices, the challenge of funding large acquisitions and the pressing need to now support both rural and urban community ambition:
  - \* £25 million by end of the Parliament.
  - \* Maximum contribution to £2 million for acquisitions.
  - \* Ring-fenced funds for land acquisition to maintain focus on diverse ownership and the transformative impact of landownership, especially as large community buyouts are hindered by high costs and ineffective legislation.
  - \* Increased support for communities, including support for early-stage groups and post-acquisition support.
- \* **Commit to new Local Democracy structures** in Scotland, requiring a whole public sector and government (cross-party and COSLA) approach to build capacity and devolve powers, decisions and finances to communities.<sup>5</sup>
- \* **Introduce enforcement mechanisms for the Community Empowerment Act** to address issues of relevant authorities using loopholes and undermining community rights.
- \* **Establish a dedicated SNIB fund** to provide low-cost financing for community owned initiatives such as community-led housing and renewable energy.<sup>6</sup>

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4. [Scottish Community Alliance Manifesto for Action p7](#)

5. This proposal has been developed by Development Trusts Association Scotland

6. [Land Reform for a Democratic, Sustainable and Just Scotland | Future Economy Scotland p4](#)



*Our stated objective is to improve the quality of life for Mull residents. We are able to do this because we understand our community; we know the businesses and what they need to thrive and grow; we know our residents because we live amongst them. Places like Mull have fantastic opportunities to build business, build communities and build local wealth, ensuring these opportunities stay in local ownership.*

**Moray Finch**

*Mull and Iona Community Trust  
General Manager (2023)*



## PRIORITY OUTCOME 2: Local economic transformation



Land is a huge source of wealth and holds immense potential to drive sustainable economic transformation. However, this can only happen if these opportunities are fairly shared and wealth is invested back into the communities that support development.

Currently, wealth generated from Scotland's land leaks from local communities and is invested elsewhere. This practice stifles opportunities for local people and restricts sustainable economic growth.

*When communities can own and share in the economic benefits gained from land use, they can invest those resources into sustainable development, creating jobs, building wealth and strengthening the local economy.*



Renewable energy plays a vital role in the decarbonising of Scotland's economy. However, the scale and extractive nature of current developments is undermining the Just Transition.



As part of the Scottish Community Coalition on Energy, we have published [manifesto recommendations](#) that reflect our member's needs. These recommendations aim to overcome barriers and unlock benefits for the climate, communities and local economies across the country.

***To unlock this potential, there needs to be a shift in current economic thinking.***

There should be a focus on the implementation of community wealth building principles that support strong local economies that are rooted in public benefits rather than private profit.

The following actions would ensure that fiscal measures and public funding relating to land are framed to deliver wider benefits. This will create opportunities for communities to actively shape their economic future and share in the benefits.

- \* ***Establish a Scottish Community Wealth Fund, similar to a sovereign wealth fund, with revenue ringfenced to support community acquisition of assets (land/buildings/renewables) that will create and sustain long-term community wealth across Scotland.***<sup>7</sup>
- \* ***Progressively reform Land and Buildings Transaction Tax by introducing a sliding scale of surcharges based on hectareage bands after more than one landholding is owned by the same owner – with all additional revenue directed to the Scottish Land Fund to support community ownership.***
- \* ***Commit to progressive taxation changes, including the exploration of reforming existing reliefs on non-domestic rates and the potential introduction of new forms of land-based taxation.***
- \* ***Increase capacity for enterprise agencies to ensure all communities can benefit from increased support and community development capacity.***

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<sup>7</sup> [A proposal for a Scottish Community Wealth Fund – Community Land Scotland](#)



*We are building community economic and social wealth from the ground up here, generating income, but also ensuring every penny of profit on all our investments and projects go back in the community. Community wealth building in action.*

**Phyl Meyer**

*Tiree Community Development Trust  
Development Manager (2023)*



## PRIORITY OUTCOME 3: Solving the housing crisis and reversing depopulation



Scotland's rural and island communities are being hollowed out by depopulation and a worsening housing crisis. In 2024, Community Land Scotland identified this as one of the most pressing issues facing Members. This led to a call for politicians to establish a [Right for young people to live in the community where they grew up](#). Due to a lack of affordable, secure housing and local opportunities, many people - particularly young people - are forced to leave the place they call home.

This pattern of depopulation is driven by increasing inequality in landownership, limited local control over development and a housing system that fails to meet local needs. A troubling example of why urgent action is needed can be seen in Coigach and North West Sutherland where it has been found that the number of children living in the area has fallen by half. <sup>8</sup>

Alongside retaining and attracting back locals, inward migration strengthens local economies, sustains populations, and enriches culture, bringing renewal, skills and strength to communities.

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8. [BiGGAR Economics \(2025\) - NW2045: Opportunities and Potential Development Models, p1](#)



## **Thriving communities need people.**



Addressing depopulation requires actively enabling inward migration to sustain services, grow local economies and fill essential roles.

Land reform also has an important role to play in addressing the urban housing crisis, where a community-led housing sector and tighter regulation of urban monopoly landowners could address many issues facing communities in Scotland's towns and cities.

It was found by the Scottish Land Commission that a third of Scotland's population live within 500m of a derelict site. For resource deprived communities, this number rises to a staggering 55%.<sup>9</sup>

Community Led Housing is an important way to create more affordable homes in both urban and rural areas. It helps build communities, strengthen local economies, and support land reform. Local communities can take charge of improving and shaping their areas for a better future. To ensure long-term success, the government should take the following actions:

- \* **Reconfigure the Rural & Islands Housing Funds into a national Community-Led Housing (CLH) Fund with a budget of £55 million to be spent by the end of this next Parliament. A ring-fenced amount should be reserved for fragile, rural and island communities. Eligibility for the new CLH Fund should mirror the criteria already in use for the Scottish Land Fund, widening access to affordable housing delivery to all communities.**<sup>11</sup>
- \* **Renew and strengthen funding for Scotland's charitable Community Housing Enablers and sustain it throughout the next Parliamentary Term.**
- \* **Provide dedicated funding for retrofit of older buildings, offering a greener and more sustainable way to increase housing stock.**
- \* **Increase powers to protect local housing for local residents through local taxation and regulation of second homes.**
- \* **Streamline planning procedures for community housing projects that cannot afford consultancy fees or withstand the large delays created by cumbersome planning processes.**
- \* **Introduce underwriting mechanisms and faster funding processes (through organisations such as the Scottish Land Fund and SNIB) to enable communities to respond quickly to urgent housing opportunities.**<sup>12</sup>

9. [Vacant and Derelict Land Taskforce - Housing & Development - Our work - Scottish Land Commission](#)

11. This proposal was developed by South of Scotland Community Housing

12 A proposal developed by Development Trusts Association Scotland



*Raasay Development Trust (Isle of Raasay, Inner Hebrides)*

*As community-led homes, the allocations can directly address the needs of the island. The 5 new homes allocated so far will address current homelessness, where islanders have been forced to move away or stay in temporary or sub-standard accommodation.*

*The new homes will also help towards reversing the demographic imbalance here. The school roll has dwindled to single figures over recent years. Losing its primary school would rip the heart out of any community.*

***Dannie Onn***

*Chair of Colonsay Community Development Company (2024) on the development of new community-led homes on Colonsay*



## PRIORITY OUTCOME 4: Communities leading the response to the climate and biodiversity crises



Immediate action is needed on the ongoing nature crises. In Scotland, our degraded natural environment and extractive land uses continues to threaten our ability to build a sustainable future. Land reform has a crucial role to play in a just transition to net zero by diversifying how land and other natural assets are owned and used.

There are concerns around large scale corporate land use and land acquisition projects which can be used to disguise unsustainable business practices, inflate rural land prices and can result in communities being shut out of vital decisions about how land is managed and who benefits from it.<sup>13</sup>

The Just transition to net zero is too often being driven by top-down decisions and multinational corporations that exclude the very communities most affected by energy prices and land use change. Mass expansion of forestry and renewable energy developments risk concentrating wealth elsewhere, leaving local people ignored or sidelined.

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13. Carbon Markets, Public Interest and Landownership in Scotland [628dea082d087\\_Land\\_Lines\\_Nat\\_Cap-Carbon\\_Markets\\_Public\\_Interest\\_and\\_Landownership\\_in\\_Scotland.pdf](#) p5



Urgent action is necessary to ensure wider public benefit is centred in the commitment to reaching Net Zero, allowing communities to meaningfully harness the opportunity and wealth that green investment brings to Scotland. As the impacts of climate change intensify, the need to adapt becomes increasingly important. Across urban and rural Scotland, communities are rising to this challenge by building local food systems, developing resilient practices and drawing on local skills to manage land in sustainable ways. On community-owned land, people are restoring peatlands, replanting native woodlands and protecting biodiversity – implementing practical, place-based solutions, led by those who know the local land best.

***Communities must be further supported to continue and scale up this vital work in fighting nature crises – financially, practically and politically.***

We call for policies that embed just transition principles, support community led action and ensure that land use decisions prioritise environmental and social benefit, as well as Free Prior and Informed Consent of local communities. The following actions would support a shift away from harmful land uses towards practices that will regenerate ecosystems, sustain livelihoods and build resilience:

- \* *Undertake a detailed analysis to evaluate the true scale of the natural finance gap in Scotland and assess the costs and benefits of private-finance led models against an alternative public-led approach, funded by reforming taxation and<sup>14</sup> subsidies.***
- \* *Realise the transformative potential of the Land Use Strategy and Regional Land Use Partnerships by harnessing their momentum and ensuring community voices are centred in decision making.***
- \* *Ensure solutions are shaped locally through Climate Action Hubs with a stronger role for local authorities in shaping land use.***
- \* *Reduce subsidies for industrial forestry and redirect funds to support locally-owned mixed productive woods, sustainable woodland management and deer management support for landowners.<sup>15</sup>***
- \* *Increase support and investment into communities to build capacity for leading innovative models in response to nature and biodiversity crises.***
- \* *Progressively realign agricultural support to deliver ever more nature-friendly practices, especially for crofters, tenants and smaller-scale farmers.***

14. [Land Reform for a Democratic, Sustainable and Just Scotland | Future Economy Scotland](#) p5 & p25

15. We welcome and support proposals put forward by the Forest Policy Group which will ensure a diverse, resilient and sustainable forestry sector that delivers environmental, social and economic benefits for communities across Scotland.



*The Langholm Initiative tree planting*

*Communities know and understand their land and are best place to lead on its development to ensure that it meets the needs of both people and nature, ensuring that it makes a positive contribution to the biodiversity and climate crises.*

**Angela Williams**

*The Langholm Initiative  
Development Manager (2025)*



## Background \*

Community Land Scotland (CLS) is the leading national voice advocating for land reform and community ownership and empowerment in Scotland. With over 140 member organisations from major crofting estates in the Western Isles to inner-city community hubs, Community Land Scotland represents the breadth of the community land movement. Community Land Scotland's vision is for the community ownership of land, buildings and other property assets to be a key driver of sustainable economic and social development across the whole of Scotland.

The community landownership movement dates back a century and has been one of Scotland's greatest success stories of the last thirty years. The 2003 Land Reform Act set the scene for an expansion in community-owned land after the grassroots successes of the 1990s. With over 25 years of evidence, it is clear that community ownership of land can transform local economies, acting as a catalyst for economic, social, cultural, and environmental development. Many communities deliver renewable energy, provide housing, create workspaces and jobs, lead on local environment and biodiversity enhancements, contribute to cultural enrichment, retain and grow the population, and provide an environment for private businesses to thrive.





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