

Exhibit 1: The Highlands and Islands of Scotland - An Enabling Framework

Community ownership and control of land has developed much further in Scotland than south of the border or in Wales. It now enjoys a well-established legislative and organisational framework, as well as a designated fund to further these various projects.

The constituent parts of this enabling framework are, in summary, as follows:

- The **Community Land Unit** was set up in 1997 by Highland and Islands Enterprise (HIE) to provide assistance to communities who wish to buy land or buildings.
- The **Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003** then created a unique legislative and enabling framework for community land ownership in rural areas:
 - Part I of the Act creates the Right of Access to privately-owned land;
 - Part II gives non-profit community bodies the pre-emptive right to buy land in which they have registered an interest, when the land is put on sale;
 - Part III gives crofting communities the right to buy their crofts, and fishing rights, whether the land is on the market or not.

This creates an opportunity for community bodies to secure community assets such as woodlands, farms, a residential care home, a Post Office, fishing rights, community facilities and land for housing. Provided not-for-profit community bodies register an interest, they have six months when the land comes up for sale, to consult, arrange an independent valuation, conduct a community ballot, prepare the business case for the buy-out and raise the purchase money. They must however demonstrate that the buy-out will enable the sustainable development of the community, as opposed to merely blocking development and change. Aims include improving access to the countryside, gaining control of local resources in order to provide income for local services and job creation.

- Growing Community Assets, the successor to the Scottish Land Fund. HIE is contracted by the Big Lottery Fund to deliver this £50 million pound fund in rural and urban Scotland. Grants are available for acquisition of a wide range of assets including land and buildings, and also development costs and revenue funding for up to 5 years. Applicant groups must be community led and controlled. Grants are assessed on the quality of the applicants' projects' outcomes in order that they will:
 - enable communities to be more enterprising and self-reliant
 - make communities stronger
 - improve access to services
 - give people more skills and confidence
 - have a positive effect on the local and global environment.

Among almost 200 communities helped by the CLU are the Isle of Eigg, Abriachan Forest Trust, Knoydart Foundation and Laggan Forest Trust.

Details of the work of the unit, news and links to projects with which it works are all available from the HIE web site (www.hie.co.uk/communityland.htm).