

The Scottish Land Fund Evaluation

Final report

4/5/07



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1: Introduction and Methodology

Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a three year evaluation of the Scottish Land Fund (SLF). The research was undertaken by SQW and Land Use Consultants (LUC) between January 2004 and November 2006. The study and its findings are based on interviews with 26 community groups that received funding over that period.
- 1.2 The report brings together the main results, our observations from these projects and draws conclusions on the achievements of the SLF and its implications for the development of the recently launched Growing Community Assets (GCA) Fund.
- 1.3 The 26 community groups were chosen to be broadly representative of the types of projects funded, their location and the scale of funding. As the two largest investments, Gigha and North Harris were also included and in the final two years some of the very small projects were replaced with larger ones. The results provide a good overview across the range of SLF supported activity, but it is also very clear that each project is unique and care should be taken in extrapolating generally from individual examples.
- 1.4 Although the two larger projects have attracted most attention, the vast majority of the projects supported have been much smaller and it is important that their contribution is not overshadowed. The review provides valuable feedback on some of these smaller projects and their achievements.

Summary

- 1.5 The SLF was set up in 2001 by what was then the New Opportunities Fund, now the Big Lottery Fund (BIG). It was administered by Highlands and Islands Enterprise in partnership with Scottish Enterprise, through the Community Land Unit. It was launched initially with £10m and was supplemented in 2003 with a further £5m. The SLF aimed to contribute to sustainable development in rural Scotland by assisting communities to acquire, develop and manage local land or land assets.
- 1.6 When it was set up, SLF represented a major new source of funding for asset-based community development in Scotland and its funding of a small number of large-scale land purchases also contributed to the debate surrounding land reform. Prior to the SLF there had been only a small number of major community land purchases, including Assynt, the Isle of Eigg and Knoydart. These were aimed at addressing the lack of investment and co-operation of private landlords, which had not only prevented community development, but over the years had led to deteriorating infrastructure and quality of life for its residents.
- 1.7 At that time funds to support community ownership of land and land assets were limited and, as was evidenced by Eigg, required major fundraising efforts to achieve. The SLF provided a new vehicle to support these activities along with the Land Reform Legislation, which came into force in 2005. By April 2006 when the SLF closed it had invested a total of £13.9m awarded

through 251 grants to 188 community groups. By any standard, this represents a substantial contribution to the empowerment of community groups and has helped to trigger a diverse range of community led activities.

- 1.8 The report concludes that the SLF has made significant contributions to all of its main objectives. It also found that there are sufficient successful examples among all types of project to indicate that the community ownership model can and is working, but that the success of individual projects depends on the qualities of the management and the community.
- 1.9 It has become increasingly important to recognise that the change in ownership is not the end, but the beginning of a process and in this respect the review is interested in how communities have used the asset rather than the fact that they own it. Most projects in the case studies have made good progress in implementing their plans and there are several examples of rapid progress.
- 1.10 The most frequently reported benefits were “social”, creating stronger networks, engagement of residents and empowerment of communities. The value of this cannot easily be quantified, but strengthening communities in these ways will help to underpin future economic development by providing opportunities for new enterprise and attracting new people to live and work within them.
- 1.11 There was also very positive feedback on the way in which the support has been delivered, both in preparing for community ownership and in addressing the challenges inherent in managing the project. This experience of the SLF provides useful lessons in the development of the new GCA Fund, in particular the importance of planning for sustainability and support for developing community enterprises. The key learning points for the GCA Fund are set out in the conclusions and include, for example, the importance of assessing management and ownership options, sharing of experience, imagination and good leadership and succession planning.
- 1.12 The review has shown how community ownership can work, but it is not automatically an appropriate solution in all cases. There will be communities that are more comfortable with a management agreement than the responsibilities that come with ownership. In other cases, the advantages of ownership might be much stronger. It is unlikely that in Gigha the same level and speed of development could have been achieved without community ownership. In other cases, such as Dunnet, a management agreement has been sufficient to achieve their objectives. Ultimately decisions on the appropriate model will depend on the nature of the community, its objectives and its capacity.

Objectives

- 1.13 The main objectives of the SLF were:
 - to improve opportunities and reduce disadvantage both for communities and individuals in rural areas
 - to encourage community involvement and participation in land ownership and management
 - to enhance the environmental diversity and quality of rural Scotland

- to facilitate positive use of the land reform legislation on the community right to buy
 - to diversify the pattern of land ownership in rural Scotland.
- 1.14 These objectives are revisited in the final chapter. To deliver these objectives, the SLF was used to support three types of projects:
- **planning and preparation of bids (technical assistance)**- to acquire or manage land and land assets. This may include undertaking feasibility studies, legal advice, valuations, business planning and community consultation. Usually required pre-acquisition, but may also be required for land development projects
 - **acquisition of land** - This can involve large areas of land on which communities intend to undertake a range of management and development projects. It can also involve smaller plots of land for environmental or recreational uses, like the management of woodland, or discrete development purposes such as social housing, recreational areas, and the provision of building-based activities
 - **land development projects** - These can include initiatives to undertake land development projects, investment in management of natural resources, infrastructure developments to meet local servicing needs, and the provision of facilities with clear economic and social benefits.
- 1.15 The SLF has been pioneering in the way it has stimulated investment in community development. At the heart of its objectives is the rationale that:
- the current pattern of land ownership is having a negative effect on the wider aims of stabilising and potentially increasing population and economic activity in rural communities, and
 - the ownership of land or land assets, for a number of reasons, can have a positive impact on social and economic conditions.
- 1.16 Through the provision of grants, the SLF helps overcome the considerable difficulties that communities have had, and would continue to have, in raising funds for investment. In this way the SLF also “facilitates the positive use of the land reform legislation” which was introduced during the period of the evaluation.
- 1.17 Another crucial aspect of the SLF is that it genuinely represents a long term investment. The land will continue to have value (and probably a rising value) over time. It provides an asset which is owned by the community and gives them leverage to negotiate further funding, investment or the possibility of generating income streams in the future. The funding for the purchase is not lost. In the worst case, the land could be returned to the public sector and remains a valuable asset. This is different from many other types of economic or social development support which often represent less tangible investments that depreciate over a much shorter period of time. Community ownership, when it works well, continues to deliver benefit for years and potentially generations.
- 1.18 Because these investments involve the transfer of ownership, they reflect a different approach to addressing community development. Instead of public agencies offering or imposing

initiatives, this gives communities a base on which to develop their own solutions within a more accountable structure. As one community project officer commented, they were “investing in the community’s future, as opposed to being invested upon”. Ownership changes the balance of power, changing relationships, and this has a number of beneficial consequences which are apparent across the projects explored in the evaluation. It is of course very difficult to measure these types of changes and even for those directly involved it can be hard to recognise, but there are examples.

- 1.19 It is also important to note that these are primarily one-off capital, rather than revenue, investments (although there is often a need for a development officer). The SLF provides support for the investment in land and land assets and it is then for the community to identify opportunities to make the most of this asset and seek public or private support for specific elements of it. In these cases the projects are largely sustainable (although the perceived need to fund project management positions means that this is not always recognised).

Growing Community Assets

- 1.20 In 2006 the Big Lottery Fund launched Growing Community Assets. This fund builds on the SLF, but provides a wider range of support and can help communities obtain a wider range of assets, across Scotland. The GCA supports communities in obtaining assets that will help them become stronger and more sustainable. These are usually physical assets: land, buildings or equipment. It aims to help communities “acquire them, improve, develop, manage and sustain them, as well as protect them”. The focus is more clearly on helping communities to make the most of acquired assets.¹

Methodology

- 1.21 The broad aims of the evaluation of the SLF programme are summarised as to:
- contribute to the evidence-base concerning rural development and social processes (such as community participation in land ownership and management, and
 - make an assessment of the programme in relation to its aims and the (then) New Opportunities Fund’s values.
- 1.22 More specifically, the evaluation was to consider both implementation issues, reviewing some of the process issues around the delivery of the projects by Community Trusts, and the impacts that these projects have had to date. This includes how successful projects have been in balancing social, economic and environmental elements and the types and scale of benefits that have been generated.

Sample

- 1.23 At the start of the evaluation in January 2004, the SLF had made 127 awards to 86 projects. The evaluation identified 20 of these cases that could be tracked over three years. In the first year all 20 cases were interviewed face to face and included discussions with not only the

¹ <http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk>

project leader or development officer, but also other Directors of the supported Trusts and members of the communities.

- 1.24 The original projects were selected carefully as a representative sample of the cases supported by the SLF. A systematic process was used to identify a suitable portfolio of projects covering a range of sizes, geographies and types. The starting point was to prepare a project typography based on the 127 grants awarded at the time the evaluation started. However, in some cases more than one grant has been given to the same organisation. For example, a technical assistance grant may be awarded followed by a larger sum for an acquisition and potentially a further grant to aid the development of the land. To analyse the portfolio of the SLF funded projects, grants relating to one piece of land were grouped together to represent one project. A shortlist of projects was compiled to provide a mixture of rural land and settlements, and a geographical spread across Scotland.
- 1.25 In this first round of interviews, we included funding for feasibility studies. This meant that where they were not successful there was little point in continuing to monitor them and these were replaced in later interview rounds by other, more substantial projects. A number of projects were also replaced over the three years: two because they already felt that they were contributing significantly to monitoring and project work and two others because there was unlikely to be further development.
- 1.26 The second year involved a lighter touch, with a programme of telephone interviews to provide an update of progress. A small number of new projects were introduced and these were visited face to face rather than by telephone. In the final year, one project was interviewed by telephone and the rest were all interviewed face to face. Again, a small number were replaced where we felt that there was little more to be gained from a further interview and where the time would be better spent meeting more substantial projects.
- 1.27 Although the report and the findings are based on the projects listed in Table 1-1, SQW also conducted an evaluation of the Community Land Unit in 2005, which included ten further case studies of projects that received the SLF funding and a large scale survey which included 52 projects that had been funded by the SLF. A summary of the main benefits of the projects from this survey is included within this report and although we have not used these specifically as examples the experience has helped to shape our understanding of how the SLF has worked and the conclusions that are drawn in the final chapter.

Interviews

- 1.28 At the start of each year, a questionnaire was developed and agreed with BIG. This changed slightly over the three years but followed a consistent structure.
- 1.29 Interviews were conducted with the project development officer or project manager and usually with at least one other director or member of the community. Visits included a tour of the facilities and often discussions with others in the community depending on what was happening on that day. For example, in Gigha, the interviews included sessions with all the directors, attendance at training sessions and a community event. Each of the visits was written up as a case study and brought together in a series of three year summaries. These form the basis of the overview of each project presented later in Table 4.1.

1.30 Although the research is based on these case examples, there have also been a number of consultations with BIG staff in Scotland in each year of the project. In addition, the evaluation has been informed by the consultations carried out as part of the separate Community Land Unit evaluation which covered the progress of community projects, the role of public funding and its delivery. These included discussions with the Scottish Executive, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Community Land Unit, Scottish Enterprise, the Crofters Commission, Forest Enterprise and Scottish Natural Heritage.

1.31 The first visits were primarily about understanding the projects and collecting details of the activities that have been funded and their future plans. Subsequent visits focused more on a number of other issues, specifically, the continuing commitment of the community, sustainability of the project and the benefits that they were generating. The main topics in the interviews were:

- understanding the project rationale and context
- development of the initial idea
- engagement of the community in the initial project idea and in subsequent decisions
- the activities that have been supported by the funds
- the benefits generated by the project (economic, social and environmental)
- views on the support received
- continuing community support
- leverage and spin out projects
- sustainability.

1.32 Table 1-1 sets out the names of the projects covered throughout the evaluation, in each year and the amount of the SLF funding that they received. Each of these projects was visited at least once. The first column shows the name of the Trust, the year of funding was when the SLF funding was awarded. The final three columns indicate in which year of the evaluation the project was interviewed. For example, Auldearn was interviewed three times but the Pit Stop Diner at Arrochar was only included in the evaluation in the final year.

Table 1-1: Projects covered in the evaluation, their location and value of grant by year

Name of Trust	Location	Year of funding	Amount	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Arrochar Pit Stop Diner	Argyll	Dec 04	£111,000			✓
Auldearn Community Trust	Nairn	Jul-02	£8,010	✓	✓	✓
Ballantrae Rural Initiative Care in the Community	Girvan	Sep-01	£26,690	✓		
Birse Community Trust	Banchory	Jul-02	£120,913	✓		
Comrie Millennium Footpath Association	Crieff	May-01	£4,381	✓	✓	✓
Crossgates Woodland Community Trust	Fife	Dec 04	£130,000			✓

Name of Trust	Location	Year of funding	Amount	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Dalmally Community Company	Dalmally	Jul-02	£34,720	✓	✓	✓
Dornie Community Projects Group	Lochalsh	Oct-02	£11,824	✓		
Dunnet Forestry Trust	Thurso	Dec-02	£35,640	✓	✓	✓
Fort Augustus Abbey	Fort Augustus	Jun-02	£2,000	✓		
Gigha Land Steering Community Group/Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust	Gigha	Sep-01	£3,617,974	✓	✓	✓
Gordon Community Woodland Trust	Gordon	Aug-01	£70,691	✓	✓	✓
Halladale Hall	Highland	Jul-04	£2,000		✓	
Iomairt Chille Choman Community Group (Port Charlotte)	Isle of Islay	Nov-01	£116,388	✓	✓	✓
Killin Care Trust	Killin	Mar-02	£90,400	✓	✓	✓
Kilmadock Community Development Trust	Doone	Jun-04	£92,584			✓
Laide & Aultbea Community Woodland Group	Inverewe, Wester Ross	Jun-02	£54,512	✓	✓	✓
Loch Katrine Community Trust	Callander	Feb-02	£961	✓		
LUCE 2000	Galloway	Oct-02	£19,422	✓	✓	✓
Morvern Community Dev Co	Lochaline	Feb-03	£2,901	✓	✓	✓
North Harris Community Steering Group/ North Harris Trust	Isle of Harris	Jun-02	£1,673,016	✓	✓	✓
North Ronaldsay Trust	Orkney	Jan-02	£50,835	✓	✓	✓
Oban War and Peace Museum	Argyll	Feb 05	£100,000			✓
Pairc	Western Isles	Nov-04	£17,600		✓	✓
Shetland Bus Friendly Society	Shetland	Aug-04	£100,000		✓	✓
Strathfillan Community Development Trust	Tyndrum	Sep-02	£58,331	✓	✓	✓
The Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust	Kinlochbervie	Jul-03	£28,509	✓		

Source: SQW SLF evaluation

Changing policy context

1.33 The Land Reform (Scotland) Act received Royal Assent in 2003, and provisions relating to the Rights to Buy in Parts 2 and 3 of the Act came into force on 14 June 2004². It had been anticipated that the Act would have a significant impact on the number of applications for the SLF funding. Despite the publicity for land reform, at the time of writing the number of community organisations which had formally registered interest in land remained relatively low³. There has been no significant increase in applications for SLF funding and there has been

² <http://www.scotland-legislation.hmso.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2003/20030002.htm>

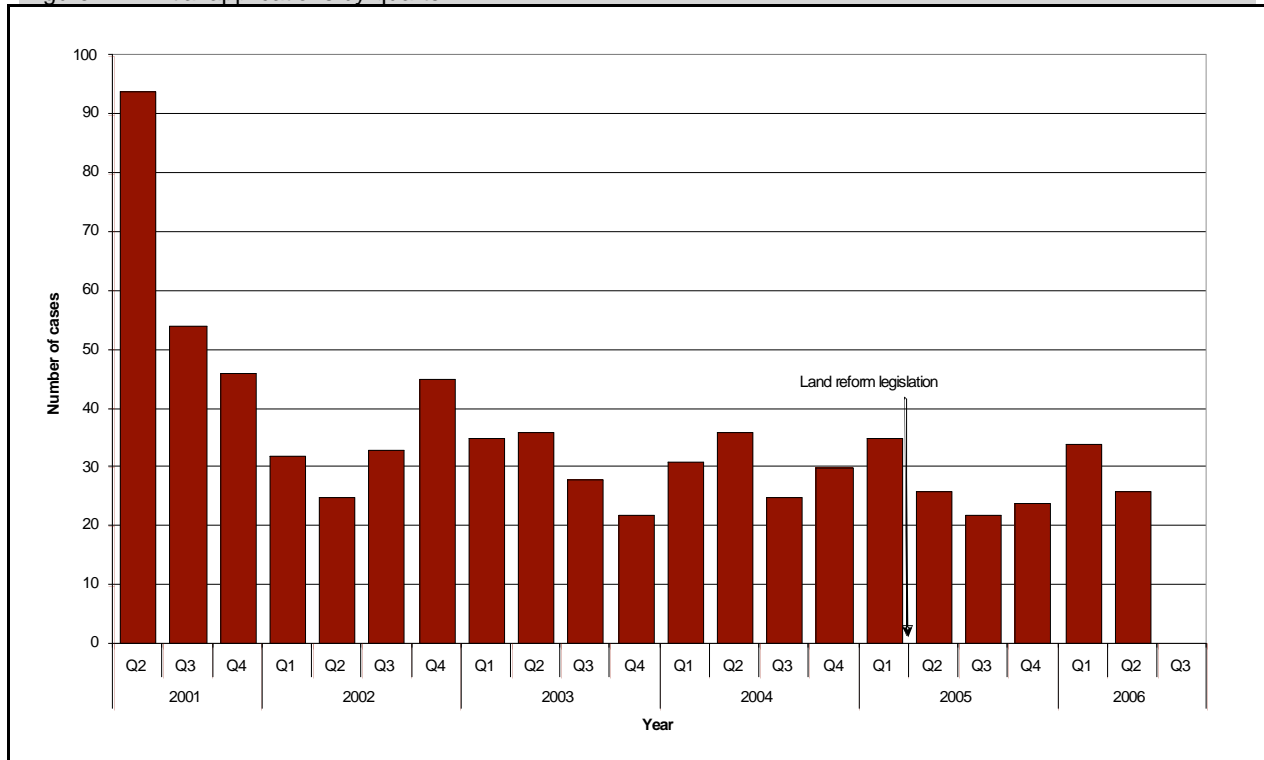
³ see <http://rcil.ros.gov.uk/RCIL/default.asp?Category=RCIL&Service=Home1>

a relatively stable pattern between 2004 and 2006 (See Figure 1-1). In March 2006, the Register of Community Interest in Land, where all registrations of interest are recorded, had six projects that had activated their right to buy and five registrations. By November 2006, this had increased to nine community groups with 25 registrations and five community groups with nine cases pending.

- 1.34 The figures have risen slowly, but evidence suggests that communities are recognising the advantages in securing a timeous application under the Act. In funding terms, while the Act provides for land to be purchased at market value, the landowner is prevented from marketing the land if a registered interest is secured over the land. Communities reacting when the land is marketed will be competing on the open market and having to offer, in most cases, higher than market value to secure the purchase. It is therefore advantageous for communities (and their funders) to secure a registered interest, rather than wait until the land is marketed.
- 1.35 Over the period of the evaluation a number of landmark cases have been publicised, increasing public awareness and understanding of the provisions. This included the refusal in 2006 to permit a community company, Dunblane (Holmehill Ltd), to register interest in an area of land on the edge of their village after it became available for sale, as it was thought that their intentions were founded on preventing development. In 2004, the Crossgates Community Woodland Trust became the first case to use the legislation in its purchase of 30 acres from the Coal Authority. There have been other high profile cases, specifically the large land buy-outs and the continuing interest in the progress on Gigha. All this has served to raise awareness and interest in community asset ownership, although the pattern of applications to the SLF has remained fairly steady.
- 1.36 The Scottish Land Fund closed in 2006 and has now been replaced by the Growing Community Assets Fund, which will provide grants for both rural and urban communities, and will distribute £50 million (as compared to the £15 million administered under the Scottish Land Fund). The GCA programme will be delivered by the Highlands and Islands Enterprise led consortium, including Scottish Enterprise, Community Enterprise in Strathclyde; Forth Sector; Social Investment Scotland; the Highlands and Islands Community Energy Company (HICEC); and Scottish Enterprise. Clearly many lessons can be drawn from the experiences of the SLF to help steer the GCA programme, which has a much broader remit than the Land Fund.
- 1.37 These changes represent a significant shift in the support of asset-based community development. Perhaps most importantly, GCA offers a more holistic structure that focuses on the *use* of assets as a mechanism for community development and a shift away from the transfer of ownership that was an objective of the Land Fund. Our findings in the previous progress reports, and work carried out for HIE, consistently found that many of the communities that had acquired land or buildings required further financial and advisory support in order to make the most of them. Growing Community Assets should help communities achieve this.
- 1.38 During the course of the evaluation, changes also took place that influenced the way in which some projects were progressed. The Crofting Reform Bill was progressing through the Scottish Parliament, and resulted in some uncertainty about the relationship between community land purchases where there were plans to create community crofting tenancies on the land. If this becomes an Act it will allow the creation of new crofts on land that had not previously been

registered for crofting and also the extension of crofting status beyond the Highlands and Islands.

Figure 1-1: Initial applications by quarter



Source: HIE/CLU data

Report structure

- Chapter 2 gives an overview of the profile of the funding awarded by the SLF over its five years.
- Chapter 3 describes and summarises progress across all the projects covered
- Chapters 4 through to 6 review the economic, social and environmental benefits reported.
- Chapter 7 considers some of the delivery and development issues raised by these projects
- Chapter 8 summarises the key points and draws conclusions from across the case examples.

2: Profile of the SLF awards

2.1 This chapter uses the SLF data to provide an overview of the types of projects supported during its five years. This covers the numbers of enquiries, applications and approvals, the number of awards and value of grants, the types of grants made and within which areas of Scotland.

2.2 Key findings

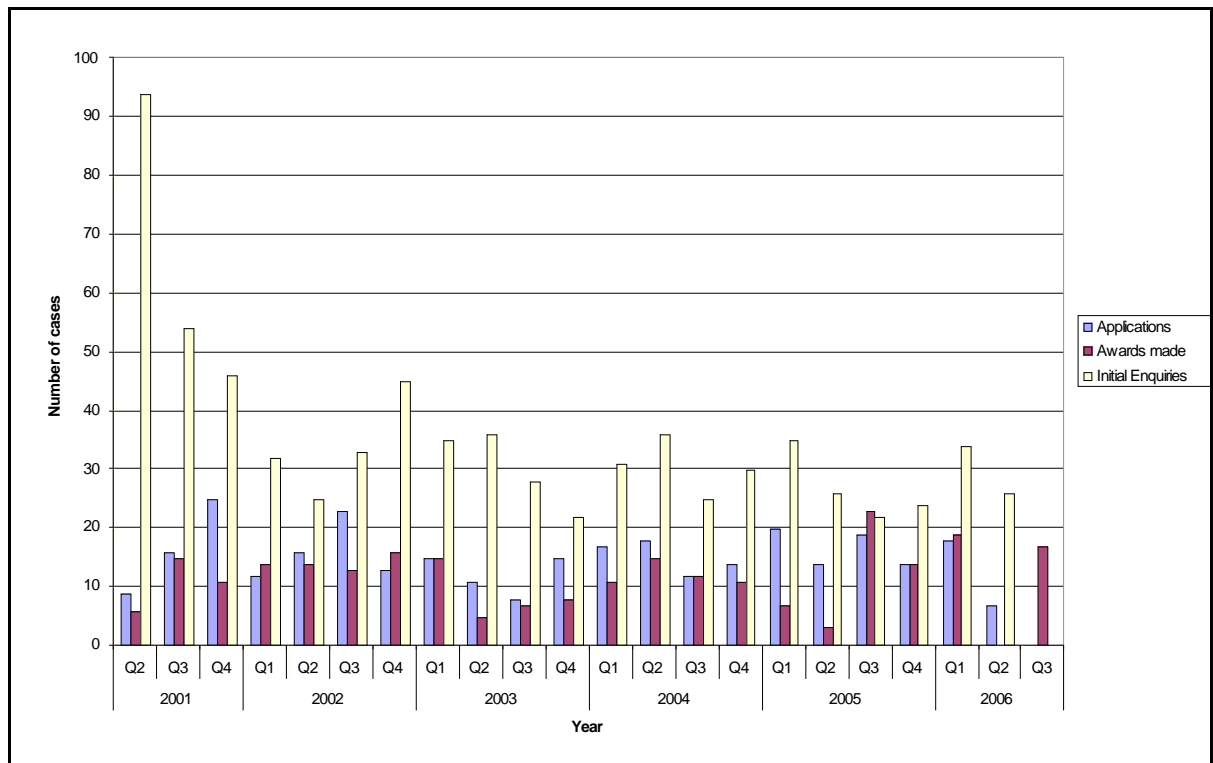
- the greatest number of enquiries were made in the first year of the Fund, although the number of grants awarded was highest towards the end of 2005. The number of applications has remained relatively constant over the five years.
- over half the SLF was allocated in the first two years of the programme
- the average size of grant awarded was just over £55,000
- on average, community groups received 1.3 awards each, with a maximum of five awards being made to any individual group
- whilst most of the SLF value was spent on acquisitions, the actual number of grants made for acquisitions was similar to the number made for technical assistance projects
- the five biggest investments account for more than half of the entire value of the Scottish Land Fund.

Enquiries, applications and approvals

2.3 The Scottish Land Fund was established in 2001 and ran until July 2006. Since its inception, the SLF has dealt with 739 initial enquiries and 316 applications. These applications have resulted in over 250 grants totalling £13.9million awarded to 188 community groups in rural areas to acquire, develop and manage local land.

2.4 Figure 2-1 shows the number of initial enquiries, applications and grants awarded between 2001 and 2006. The number of initial enquiries at the start of the programme was extremely high and this has tailed off as time has gone on to around 20-30 enquiries per quarter. The peak at the start was likely driven by the initial publicity surrounding the fund start up. The introduction of the Land Reform Act in 2005 appears to have had little impact on initial enquiries.

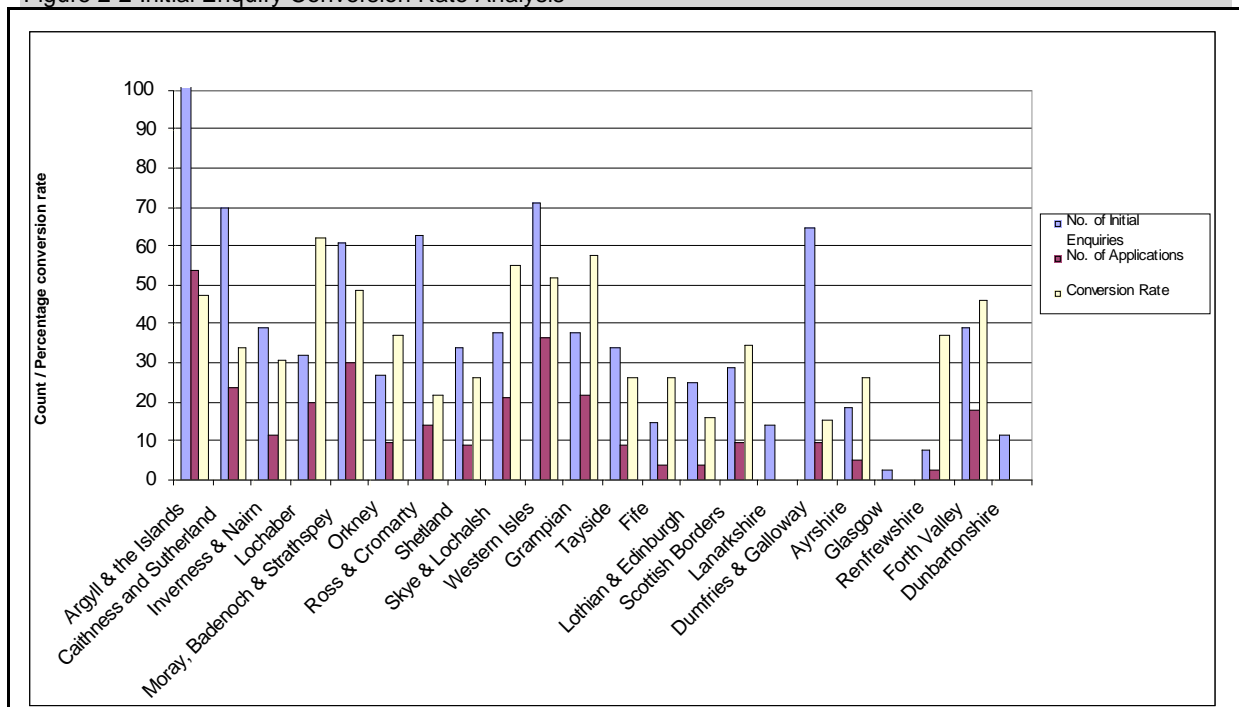
Figure 2-1 Initial enquiries, applications and the SLF grants awarded



Source: SLF data

2.5 As shown in Figure 2-2, Argyll and the Islands attracted the greatest number of initial enquiries, followed by the other HIE areas. This may reflect the presence of the Community Land Unit Advisers in these areas.

Figure 2-2 Initial Enquiry Conversion Rate Analysis

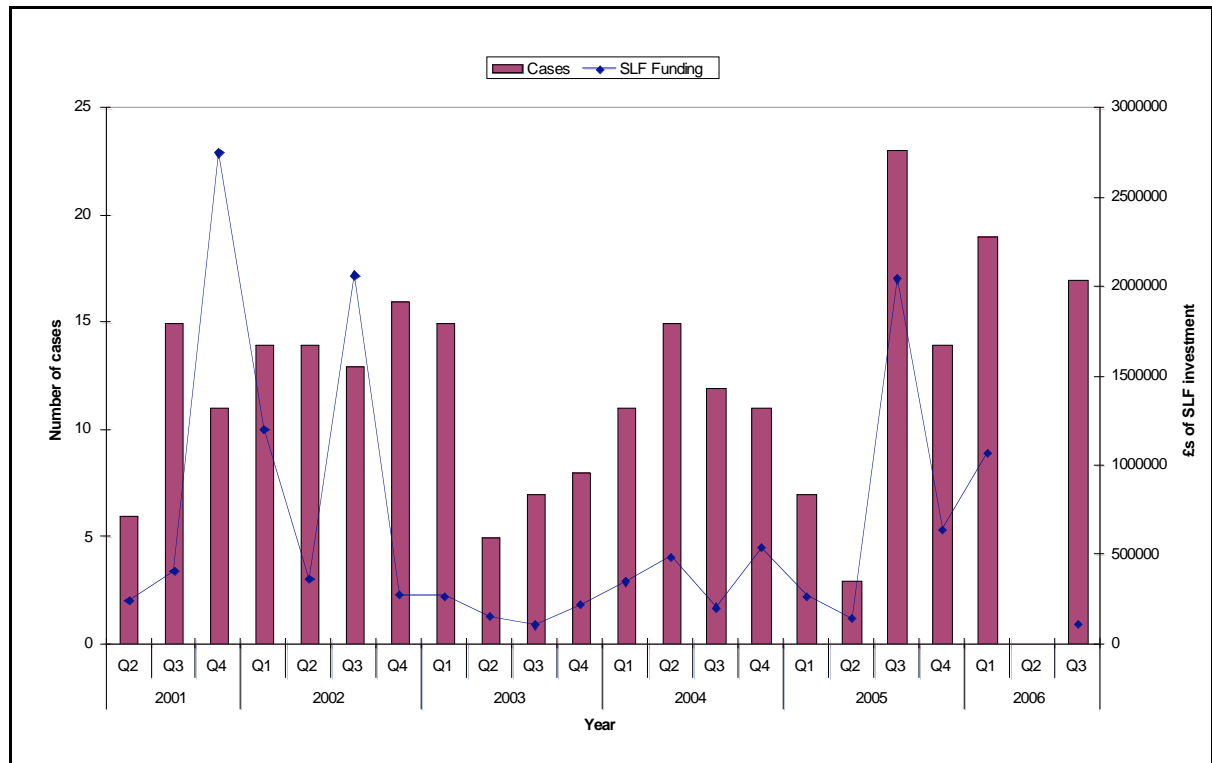


Source: Chart taken from 39/1 Operational update for July 2006 Committee Meeting in Inverness

Number of awards and levels of funding

2.6 Over half the SLF was allocated in the first two years of programme and ninety percent had been allocated by 2005, the year when the Land Reform Act came into force. As can be seen in Figure 2-3, both the number of grants made and the level of the SLF investment dipped in 2003 and this is consistent with trends in Community Land Unit (CLU) activity that year.

Figure 2-3 Cases and SLF Funding by year

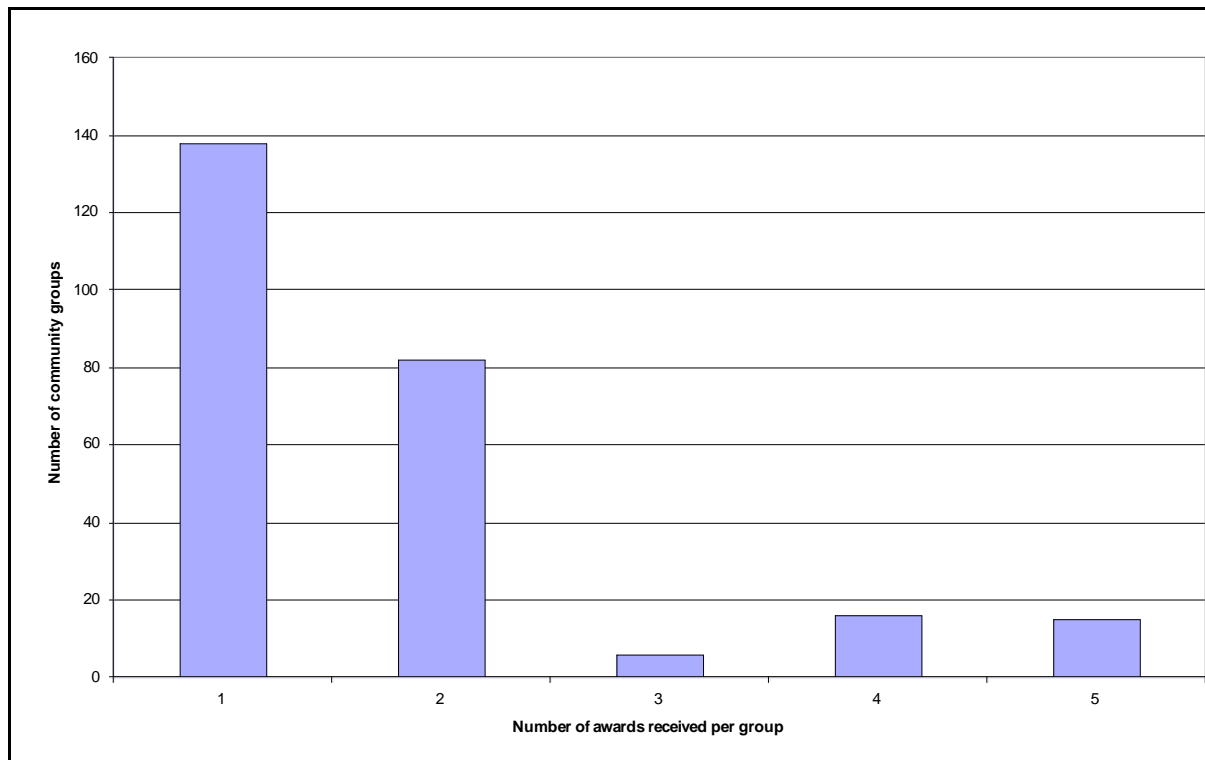


Source: SLF data

2.7

2.8 As shown in Figure 2-4, the number of grants received varied for different groups. On average, community groups received 1.3 awards each, with a maximum of five awards being made to any individual group.

Figure 2-4 Number of awards made per community group

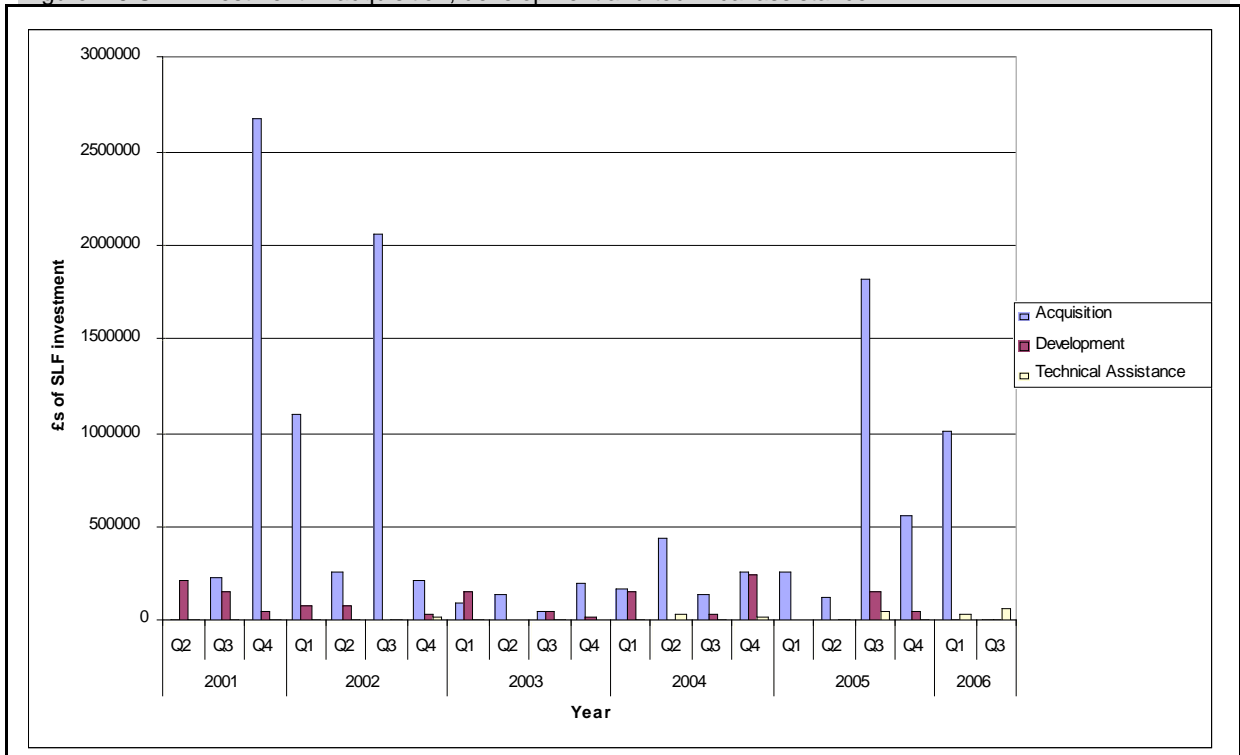


Source: SLF data

Distribution of award by grant type

2.9 The grants were split into three project areas: acquisition, development and technical assistance. The grants included a wide variety of projects, ranging from large estate community buyouts such as North Harris and Gigha to small scale feasibility studies. Figure 2-5 shows the level of investment in each type of project area.

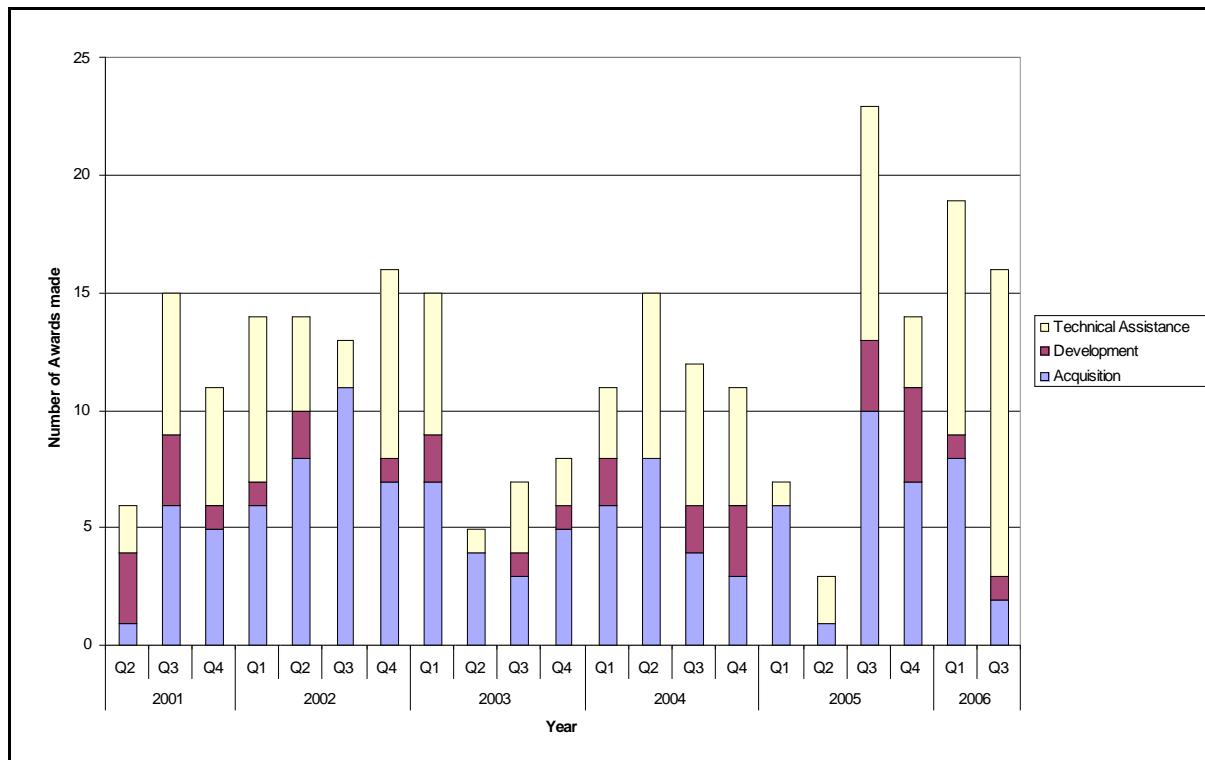
Figure 2-5 SLF investment in acquisition, development and technical assistance



Source: SLF data

2.10 Whilst most of the SLF value was spent on acquisitions, the actual number of grants made for acquisitions was similar to the number made for technical assistance projects. As shown in Figure 2-6 the smallest proportion of awards each year was made to development funding. This may reflect the fact that community acquisition of assets is a relatively new trend and projects tend to be in the early stages.

Figure 2-6 Type of grant awarded over time

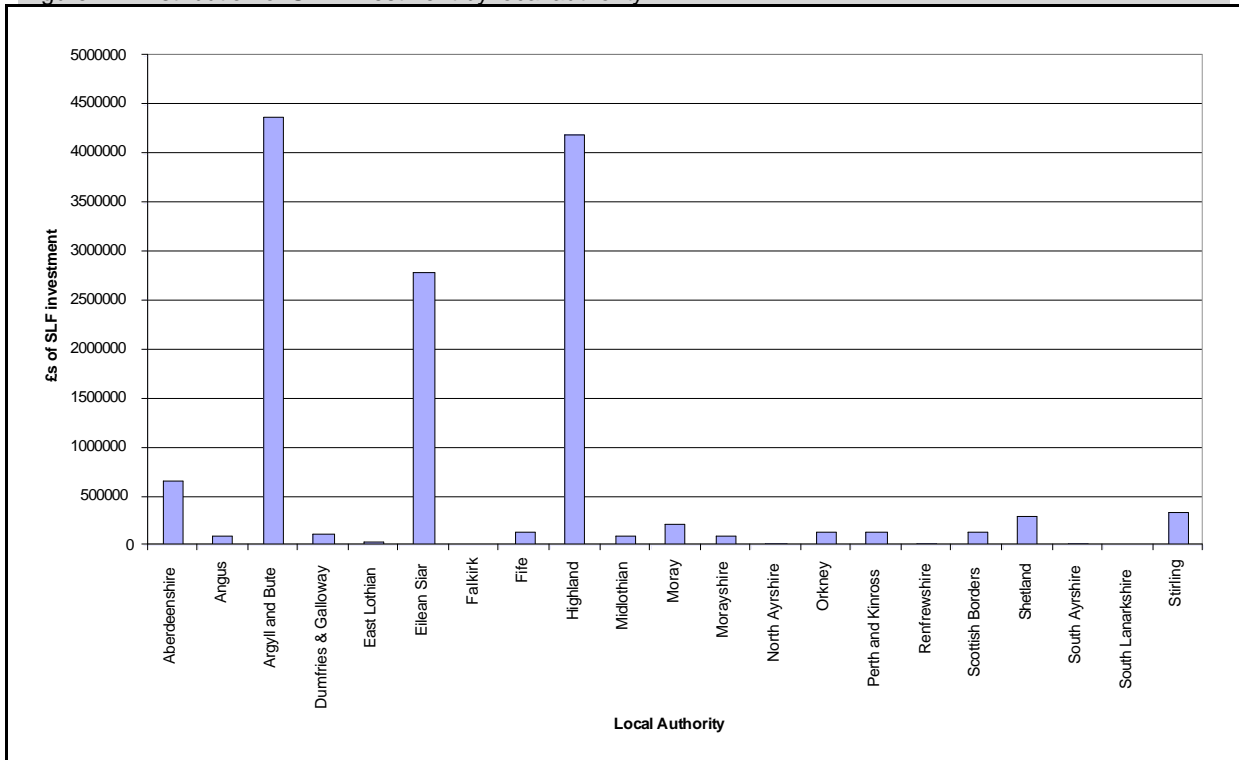


Source: SLF data

Distribution of awards by Local Authority area

- 2.11 The Highlands, Argyll and Bute and Eilean Siar received the largest value of investment, as shown in Figure 2-7. However, this disproportionate level of investment is heavily weighted by a few bigger projects. Overall, the five biggest investments account for more than half of the entire value of the Scottish Land Fund. For example, in Argyll and Bute in 2001, over £2 million was invested in the acquisition of Gigha, which accounts for over 90% of the area's total funding for that year. Similarly, Eilean Siar in 2002 was dominated by the £1.6 million invested in the North Harris Trust project and the Assynt Foundation acquisition and development project in the Highland area in 2005 also accounted for 90% of the investment made in the area that year.
- 2.12 Local Authorities (LAs) within the Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) area cover around a third of rural Scotland and the vast majority of the SLF awards were made in these LA areas. The higher levels of investment in the HIE area most likely reflect greater demand from this area, due perhaps to the history of community land ownership aspiration and the fact that community groups in these local authority areas could access match funding from HIE's Community Land Unit (CLU).

Figure 2-7 Distribution of SLF investment by local authority



Source: SLF data

Conclusions

- 2.13 The number of initial enquiries when the SLF was first introduced was extremely high. This fell after the first year and has remained fairly constant since then, suggesting that there is still demand for the SLF type funding. The geographical spread of awards grew during the programme period. At the same time, investment continued in areas involved with the programme from the start. Indeed, most of the areas receiving SLF investment during the first half of the programme went on to receive funding for other projects in later years.
- 2.14 However, whilst the grants have been shared between almost two hundred community groups across Scotland, the majority of the funding value has gone to a small number of major projects. Most of the investment value was spent on acquisitions although the actual number of grants made was split fairly evenly between acquisitions and technical assistance. A much smaller proportion of grants were received for development funding. Four out of the five largest projects have received development funding since acquisition, with the fifth project only acquiring the land in March 2006. This suggests that, as time goes on, communities are likely to desire further funding in order to maximise the potential of community-owned assets.

3: Project activities and progress

Introduction

- 3.1 This chapter describes the projects supported and the activities undertaken at the time of the final visit in 2006. The details are set out in Table 3-1 and are helpful in understanding the huge variation in scale and activities that have been supported. It is useful to bear this in mind when considering the types of benefits reported later. The Table summarises the activities and identifies key points for each case.
- 3.2 It is important to remember that the ownership of these are all long term investments and it would be misleading to judge them solely on the progress of the first three years. The review can only provide a guide to the way in which activities have been taken forward *so far*. Much of the benefit is likely to lie in the future. Having said that, these projects have all made progress following acquisition.

Key findings

- Across the 26 projects, four have made rapid progress, 18 have made good progress and five have faced serious delays. In particular the progress of Gigha, North Ronaldsay, Dunnet and Port Charlotte on Islay has been impressive
- Following acquisition the ambition to take forward community plans for the assets does not seem to have reduced and in some cases membership of community groups has grown
- It is common for there to be a lull between acquisition and the next phase of development. It is important that projects are supported in implementing this stage and this is when development officer support is most needed
- Having a development officer greatly helps ensure a project's progress. The people managing projects frequently found that it required more time and commitment than they anticipated. Those that rely solely on volunteering can find it harder to move forward
- Although progress in some projects may have been slower than was anticipated, with the exception of Whitefield Loch, all the projects continue to be delivered by the original Trusts and to develop their plans
- Progress should not be judged on the first couple of years, particularly the larger land ownership projects, and the speed of development should be seen in this context. Building a sound planning base is a priority in the longer term
- Although support has been good, the projects that experienced delays or difficulties felt that they could have had a better understanding of the pitfalls at the outset, specifically the tendency to underestimate the time and the commitment required.

- Several projects have faced challenges, for example through storm damage, problems recruiting staff and withdrawal of funding, but it is reassuring that they have continued to move forward
- The stronger projects are characterised by good leadership and imagination. These projects have used the initial asset ownership as a basis for new ideas. GCA should promote and build on this imagination and confident leadership.

Activities and progress

- 3.3 Of the 26 community groups that were interviewed, we have identified four where we feel development has been rapid and five where there have been significant delays or problems. The remainder have all made good progress, although it was not uncommon for development officers to feel they were behind schedule. Of the projects covered we would categorise perhaps four as having shown most rapid progress.
- 3.4 It is important to highlight the amount of work needed and the responsibility that has been taken on by the communities. Nearly all those interviewed considered that the amount of work had been greater than anticipated and that progress had been slower than they would have liked. Progress varied greatly and depended on the scale and type of project as well as its environment. Physical development projects among smaller communities could more easily make a rapid start. Larger more complex projects require significantly more planning. Another factor is management and leadership. Good project management and leadership will provide direction, resolve conflicts and avoid potential pitfalls. This can speed up the progress and smooth what are frequently complex processes. This is where development officer support and experience can be critical.

Rapid progress

- Gigha, which despite the changes in personnel, has continued to progress and implement plans. There are some very tangible outcomes in the shape of the quality housing, community engagement, growing population and business base and the direct income from the wind turbines.
- Iomairt Chille-Chomain (Islay) has also pressed ahead with a range of projects including the development of a major new Island Centre, but has also completed some of the smaller projects. It is another good example of how the SLF support and asset ownership has allowed the community to develop a range of initiatives.
- On North Ronaldsay, the first two phases of a five phase project are now almost complete. The woollen mill is trading at a steady level and there has been some further planning for future development. In addition, the Trust has carried out a variety of other projects, such as purchasing the New Kirk, establishing a cycle project and is now considering a number of other spin out projects.
- The project in Dunnet is now generating income, carrying out a lot of environmental work and is also delivering educational projects. Compared with last year when they felt they were behind schedule, there is now a lot more confidence and optimism.

Good progress

- Although the SLF funding initially covered the land around a memorial site, the Morvern Community Development Company completed this work and has been investigating a range of other projects. It has been outward looking, recognising the opportunities to partner with other community organisations. Over the last year progress in implementing these ideas has been slowed during a period without a development officer.
- The Oban War and Peace Museum has progressed swiftly and has moved into its new premises which re-opened in August 2006, reporting an increase in visitor numbers. It is working towards Scottish Museum accreditation.
- The Shetland Bus Friendship Society has also now acquired new premises for a museum and is currently making good progress in raising funds for the conversion of the property.
- The Strathfillan Community Development Trust was hampered by a long wait for funding agreements and a withdrawal of support from LEADER +. These delays have meant that there was slower progress in the development of the site initially, but since then a second land acquisition has taken place and reinvigorated the project.
- Comrie has been slowed by legal delays and ill health but is also anticipating increased activity now that the footpath has been cut. In the last year there has been a lot more preparation for the next phase and progress has been steady.
- Gordon Community Woodland Trust, visited in the first year had made significant progress, achieving many of its objectives. It is widely regarded as good model of a woodland project, attracting a lot of interest.
- Equally, the Birse Community Trust which was also visited in the first year is a well established group. The SLF funded several of a number of projects that the Trust is involved in. BCT is a good example of imaginative community development.
- The Killin Care Trust facility has continued to operate successfully and has grown since the first visit three years ago, employing 12 people and managing what has now become an important community asset, although plans to develop further services have been restricted.
- North Harris is a major SLF investment and by far the largest land area purchased. A lot of effort has been put into the “groundwork” of developing plans and partnerships. Its development is rightly viewed as a large scale and long term project. There has been a recent community consultation exercise and applications for planning permission for wind turbines. The acquisition of the neighbouring Seaforth Estate adds further to the scale of the Trust’s operations.
- Laide and Aultbea Community Woodland has also made progress despite the additional work caused by wind damage. It continues to have strong commitment from team and community and, despite the setbacks, optimism in the last year was high.

- Crossgates has made fairly slow progress since the purchase was completed in May 2005. There have been further community planning meetings and environmental tidying, but delays in getting a five year plan prepared, which was needed to get Forestry Commission funding for tree planting has meant that the project has made less progress than anticipated.

Faced delays

- The Dalmally Community Company has faced significant delays waiting for funding to implement plans and as a result progress had been slower than anticipated. However, the construction of a sports facility is now underway although plans for the village hall are still being held back while they wait for Council funding and then other match funding.
- Auldearn Community Trust has undertaken a major change of plans after limited progress with the initial project and difficulties securing consensus among stakeholders. The project has progressed slowly, starting with a feasibility study to set out how the site could be used. Subsequently planning consent and funding have been secured to provide recreation facilities on the site. The Trust has now started an extensive tree planting on the site boundaries
- Pairc Trust has submitted an application to purchase part of the Pairc estate under part iii of the Land Reform Act (Scotland) 2003. This application is currently at the Scottish Land Court and the Trust is unable to proceed until the Land Court has decided whether or not to allow the bid to go ahead.
- Kilmadock Development Trust plan to develop an old building as business units and offices as well as community space, but progress has been slow because difficulties finding sufficient volunteer time to develop the premises.
- Finally, Whitefield Loch has had a complex partnership history and ownership has been transferred to the Community Council following the disbanding of LUCE 2000 and the Penfield Trust. Despite these problems, the Loch continues to be a valuable community asset.

Conclusions on progress

- 3.5 The feedback from these projects suggests that following acquisition, the ambition to take forward the communities' plans has not reduced and in some cases is sparking further activity. Frequently those leading the projects would comment on a "lull" between the hectic period leading up to the bid and the announcement of its success, and regrouping to start to take their plans forward. Although this was not the case among the projects covered in this evaluation, there is a danger that this momentum might not be regained and it is important that there is support to help re-enthusiasm communities where this is needed.
- 3.6 In cases where delays were reported these were often in relation to legal or funding issues, particularly in securing funding associated with development plans or where securing other funding has required changes in the proposed project. Although progress in some projects

may have been slower than was anticipated, with the exception of Whitefield Loch all the projects continue to be delivered by the original Trusts and to develop their plans, despite some frustrating delays. In fact, among the 188 supported Community groups, Whitefield is the only project that we are aware of that has had to change ownership. Given that many in the sample have been operating for three, four or five years this represents a considerable success.

- 3.7 Nor should rapid progress be considered as necessarily appropriate in all cases. These are often long term projects that require to be taken forward sensitively. In some cases, a lighter touch may be appropriate where there are environmental concerns. The projects on Colonsay and North Harris both stressed the long term nature of their work. Given that the ownership of these assets is a long term investment it would be misleading to judge them on progress within the first few years, but where there are clear ambitions, it is helpful to demonstrate where these are being fulfilled and where there have been delays.
- 3.8 Despite this many of the community groups and development officers felt that development had taken longer than they thought. Several felt it would be helpful to provide a better understanding of the pitfalls and the tendency to underestimate the time and commitment required.
- 3.9 The feedback from the final year was more encouraging. In year two there were several projects facing delays as they waited for funding, but in the final year these have moved forward again. Laide and Aultbea had a major task to repair the wind damage, Strathfillan was awaiting funding discussions as was Dalmally, and Comrie had legal issues to resolve. There is now more progress and optimism among these projects. The Pit Stop Diner in Arrochar is another case which a year ago faced considerable funding problems but has now turned around its performance. It would be unrealistic to expect none of the projects to face challenges of these kinds, but it is encouraging that the communities and the projects are sufficiently robust to overcome them.
- 3.10 On the positive side, the progress on Gigha has been remarkable over the three years of the evaluation. The plans that were discussed during the first evaluation meeting have largely all been implemented. There is significant new and refurbished housing, the wind turbines are meeting the income targets expected and the population continues to grow toward its long term target. What is impressive is not just the breadth of ideas and activities that are planned, but that they are being delivered by the community and the Trust. Progress on North Ronaldsay, too, has been rapid. There is a structured plan which the Trust is delivering and the level of activity on the island has continued to grow during the period of the evaluation. At Port Charlotte on Islay, the visitor centre discussed at previous interviews is now nearing completion and the Oban War and Peace Museum is open and trading.
- 3.11 One of the things that characterises these stronger projects is imagination. All these projects have used the initial asset ownership to take forward new ideas, some of which were planned originally and others which have been developed as a result of the initial ownership. Strengthening this imagination and ambition should be an aim for the new GCA fund. It can be supported by strong communication, project visits, presentations and network events. The better the exchange of ideas and the more projects involved the more interesting and imaginative activities will be and this seems to be one of the keys to stronger projects.

- 3.12 The evaluation has covered a wide spectrum of types of projects and it would be expected that progress would vary across the sample, but generally, while some are relatively slower than others, they are all continuing to make progress towards their goals and making contributions to the economic, social and environmental conditions of the communities that support them.

Table 3-1 Project overview and key points

Project	Overview	Key points
Arrochar Pit Stop Diner (covered in last year only)	<p>This project commenced with the community acquiring the pit stop diner in December 2005. They have since run the diner as a going concern.</p> <p>The group struggled at first to make the project work. Overly optimistic figures that were quoted at the time of purchased, creating difficulties further down the line when anticipated income streams were not realised. In addition, there was a change of management and the group was diverted also diverted by other activities. As a result, progress with the project proved to be slower and more difficult than had originally been expected.</p> <p>The group undertook improvements to the interior of the building and to the area immediately adjacent to it. The interior refurbishment aimed to provide a more flexible space that could be used by different groups for a range of activities.</p> <p>The group has gradually improved its economic performance over the course of the project, to the extent that it is now making a slight profit and able to sustain jobs effectively. However, the bad weather has not helped their income. They have reinvested in some of the kitchen facilities, ensuring that the diner continues to run efficiently and meet required standards.</p> <p>The facility is well used by many local people and groups and it supports several jobs. However, the ultimate aim of the project is to generate income that in turn will support the development of future activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been difficulties in running the project but a recovery action plan has been put in place which, along with hard work and commitment from volunteers, is showing results. • It provides good quality employment, helping to retain young people. • Explicit role of diner as a community asset that can help to realise other community projects by generating income. • As with Killin, the group has had some difficulties with staffing at the managerial level, and this is thought to have slowed progress to some extent. • The group feels they have been diverted from the project by other initiatives, although it could also be argued that the level of time and commitment required for the diner to be run and to generate income will slow their progress on other initiatives, including the village hall.
Auldearn Community Trust (covered over 3 years)	<p>This project sought to acquire and improve an area of land on the edge of the village of Auldearn, located between the A96 and the primary school.</p> <p>The project was led by a small number of directors, who were reluctant to seek full community involvement until after acquisition had been successfully completed.</p> <p>At the Year 1 Stage, the relatively non-inclusive approach to the project raised some concerns amongst the evaluators, that the project may be difficult to sustain if not fully supported by the community, and in particular by the school and the neighbouring property owners.</p> <p>The project has since progressed slowly, initially through the preparation of a feasibility which set out how the site could be used. Subsequently planning consent and funding were secured to progress plans to provide recreation facilities on the site.</p> <p>The Year 3 visit revealed that the group is continuing to make limited progress with the project. Extensive tree planting on the site boundaries has been undertaken, which should enhance its sense of containment considerably, and help to make it a more welcoming environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties in gaining community consensus potentially arising as a result of a lack of early engagement in the acquisition process. • Generally slow progress, although the project leaders have built up wider support for activities. • Successful securing of additional funding for development costs. • Initial concerns about passage through the planning system were overcome during the course of the project. • Concerns amongst some local people, including the school, were resolved during the course of the project. • Project aims to achieve environmental improvements including through planting of native woodland.

Project	Overview	Key points
Birse Community Trust (covered in first year)	<p>The SLF has provided a total of six grants for technical assistance, acquisition and development. These allowed the community to purchase the church hall, the old school where BCT is based and a small area of land next to a sawmill.</p> <p>In December 2006, the Trust used SLF funds to purchase a local forest (this was after the evaluation visit in 2004).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BCT is already a well established and highly regarded community trust. The SLF grants for buildings had been helpful but were only one part of a much wider set of activities that are funded through many different sources. This made attributing the benefits of the SLF funds very difficult. • The Trust is characterised by a broad range of integrated projects, imaginative ideas and a high level of community engagement (all local residents, 750 people, are members of BCT).
Colonsay Community Development Company (covered in last year only)	<p>The purchase of a 0.15 hectare of land adjacent to the village shop on Colonsay in order to re-develop the site as a petrol station.</p> <p>A feasibility study looking at buying and creating new crofts and development of land plots.</p> <p>Legal review of the proposed method of acquiring 3 existing crofts and creating 8 new crofts and development land on Colonsay.</p> <p>Acquisition of three crofts by the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petrol station has been run as a community business since 2001 • The CCDC recently restructured itself which has helped to get involvement from a wider range of residents • Masterplan currently being drawn up for the crofts and land has been temporarily let for grazing by local crofters
Comrie Millennium Footpath Association (covered over 3 years)	<p>The overall project plan is to create a 1450 metre circular, hard surface footpath suitable for use by wheel chair users and the less able. The route will include rest areas, picnic facilities, a sensory area and viewpoints. Technical Assistance Grant used to contribute to the legal fees to agree and draw up a management agreement between CMFA and each of the three landowners, the design of bridges and walkways, a planning application and the preparation and assessment of tender documents.</p> <p>A second technical assistance grant was used to cover legal fees and a feasibility study of the creation of a conservation wetland area for Lednock Wood.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access agreement signed and progress has been made in surveys, cutting the path route and fundraising events • Income streams have been generated for local contractors • Although community engagement had dipped, now that some trails are in place, interest has risen again • Planning permission now submitted for the next stage of the project • The Trust has 80 household supporters signed up to receive their newsletter
Crossgates Community Woodland Trust (covered in last year only)	<p>Crossgates was the first land purchase to use the new Community Right to Buy legislation. Following more than ten years in discussion with the Coal Authority, the community registered interest in 30 acres of land that includes 10 acres of woodland. The area has been used by local people for years and its potential sale was seen as having a major negative impact on the amenity of the village. When it was put up for sale the community had to act quickly to complete the necessary ballot and secure funding from the SLF.</p> <p>A five year plan has been prepared which includes tree planting, a wildflower meadow, tidying up the burn that runs through the land, ideas for educational use, cycling and walking paths and a car park. Following the purchase there has been a slight delay in taking the project forward. The project is essentially sustainable, requiring little ongoing investment although funding for specific projects may be needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Community buy out using (and testing) new legislation • Sustainable project • Evidence of continuing community involvement and support • Range of woodland-based ideas for local activities

Project	Overview	Key points
Dalmally Community Company (covered over 3 years)	The acquisition of 2.5ha of land adjacent to the village of Dalmally with a view to establish a sports field and erect a community and sports centre.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress has been slower than originally expected but the project is now beginning to take shape. Full planning permission has been awarded for the playing field, road and car-park and the land has been acquired. Outline planning permission has been received for the hall and a full hall planning application was submitted before Christmas 2006. • Work started in August 2006 on the construction of the entrance road and car park. The hall has been redesigned and survey work has been undertaken • Continuing local fundraising • Until the projects are completed, only limited benefits will be evident • Dependence on one major funding source has led to delays in gaining buy in from other sources • Membership has increased from 60 to 79
Dornie Community Projects Group (covered in year 1)	<p>Acquisition of plot adjacent to housing on end of village.</p> <p>The group was considering scope to use the land to create a community garden. Part of the land was also used to provide car parking, to help ease congestion at this end of the village. The land was strategically located between the village and Eilean Donan Castle, and so it was hoped that improvements and interpretation would help draw some of the many visitors to the castle into Dornie.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car parking had been provided, and the site had been cleared early in the process • The group was in the process of exploring options for improving the main part of the site. • This was a small scale project, which although significant for this small community, is likely to provide relatively limited benefits overall. • The community felt that their confidence had grown and it should be noted that they have since successfully secured additional funding for a village hall. • 100 members
Dunnet Forestry Trust (covered over 3 years)	<p>SLF funding received to contribute to the costs of a 5-year development programme to manage and develop 104 hectares (248 acres) as a community forest.</p> <p>A development grant was later received to continue supporting the employment of a Community Forest Manager.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Forest is owned by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the Trust manages the site as a community forest for SNH • Good progress made towards all objectives. It is forecast that most of the objectives will be met in 18 months • Woodland development continues as planned with over 35,000 trees planted, 32 acres of largely windblown pine cleared and new paths and trails created • Recreation and education plans implemented on-site • Increased volume of wood sales and wood chip is generating income for the trust • Forester role has moved on from originally planning project work to taking plans forward to implementation. He also carries out external consultancy

Project	Overview	Key points
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work which provides the Trust with additional income Membership has increased to 430 members Spin out projects planned for 2007 – e.g. Highland Year of Culture Art project, Dark Skies Astronomy Activities, tePOOKa theatre group workshops, Midsummer Fairies theatrical production by Thurso Junior Players, Tim the rope man demonstration/workshop, Caithness Arts Week and Stop/Motion animation day.
Fort Augustus (covered in first year)	<p>Given SLF and Community Land Unit grants towards commissioning a valuation of Fort Augustus Abbey and the costs of the group incorporating itself as a company limited by guarantee</p> <p>The project did not progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project dropped from future years after unsuccessful bid
Gigha (covered over 3 years)	<p>This is the largest of the SLF supported projects and has emerged as a flagship model of community land ownership. It has led to a huge range of activities and healthy community involvement. Projects have included a major investment in the housing stock on the island, with refurbishments to a high environmental standard, management of the hotel, purchase and operation of three wind turbines, support of new businesses, quarrying etc.</p> <p>Above all the buy out has led to a strong community spirit and high levels of capacity building. As a result the population has risen from 98 to over 150 with more younger people and schoolchildren as well as new employment supported.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many of the activities that were planned are now being realised and the benefits are feeding through. Overall, the population has increased to 151 compared with 98 prior to the buy out. The housing offers a direct improvement in living conditions for residents and the wind farm is generating the income originally targeted The community has remained very involved and there continues to be interest in taking on directorships, although engagement is perhaps slightly lower as the community become more discerning in the issues that they become involved with. There remains the optimism and confidence that was reported from the previous visits and a sense that real progress has continued to be made both in economic and social terms.
Gordon Community Woodland Trust (covered in first 2 years)	Awarded two grants by the SLF: a technical assistance grant, and an acquisition grant to purchase woodland for the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project has made impressive progress, delivering many of the objectives set out in the 2004 plan The Trust believes that this has also had a knock on effect in stimulating other community activities But concern over dependence on public funding A key challenge is maintaining community support over time Strong partnership working with the Borders Forest Trust Trust has 120 members
Halladale Hall	The legal costs associated with the transfer of 0.3 hectares of land gifted to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquisition of land completed

Project	Overview	Key points
(covered in first year)	the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The land was originally acquired to build a community hall on. However, once the village church became available, it was decided to proceed with purchasing that and turning it into a village hall instead. The original 0.3 hectares will now be used for a car parking area instead.
The Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust (covered in second year)	Acquisition of an existing house in Kinlochbervie to be used to provide short rentals for incoming key workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquisition completed and improvements carried out to the property The property has already been let twice to incoming teachers and their households – both of whom have now secured permanent housing solutions locally The Trust has 138 corporate members Project was initiated by Kinlochbervie Community Council and the two organisations have entered into a working partnership
Iomairt Chille-Chomain (covered over 3 years)	<p>Acquisition of a football field and surrounding fields on the edge of the settlement to provide a range of benefits including improved recreation facilities, a new island centre, sustainable crofting, environmental management and interpretation.</p> <p>Building of the Visitor Centre is progressing well and Church funding secured to fund centre manager. Opportunities to generate income through centre activities which is intended to help ensure the sustainability of the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall the purchase of a relatively small area of land has provided a wide range of benefits for the community of Islay as a whole Progress made on agreeing contract for Island Centre and other projects Community engagement has increased Considered to be sustainable with only the wages of the development officer as a revenue cost
Killin Care Trust (covered over three years)	<p>Acquisition of care home for elderly people to ensure this facility is maintained locally.</p> <p>Project focused on ensuring smooth day to day running of the facility.</p> <p>The project is run by a group of directors. Direct involvement on the part of the wider community is limited, although they generally support the home and its residents.</p> <p>Employment numbers have grown during the course of the project and staff are trained on an ongoing basis to ensure they deliver high standards and meet the requirements of the Care Commission. Employment conditions have improved substantially since the home was acquired.</p> <p>Around 10 residents benefit from residency at any given time. Their friends and family also benefit from the availability of care within their community, substantially reducing travel time and costs for visitors and ensuring elderly people continue to feel connected with their community.</p> <p>The fabric of the building has been continually improved and the group has also significantly improved the gardens of the home, providing a pleasant space for residents and their visitors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A high degree of responsibility and professionalism has been required from the directors in order to ensure the home meets statutory requirements, safety checks, etc. This has proven to be a 'necessary challenge', which requires considerable time inputs from key individuals within the Directors' group. A new manager has recently been appointed and this should help. The group had some difficulty in dealing with staffing, and in particular filling the position of home manager. This took some time to work through but has now been resolved. The not for profit nature of the home helps to ensure that investment in staff and the fabric of the building are feasible. This has led to significant improvements to the conditions for both staff and residents over the course of the project. The home has won an award for the high standards in its kitchen. Good quality home cooking contributes to the home's high standards of care. The group has not been able to diversify care options on offer within the home (i.e. respite care) due to wider restrictions. This could be beneficial for the project in the future, providing benefits to more local people.

Project	Overview	Key points
Kilmadock Community Development Trust (Covered in last year only)	<p>The project led to the acquisition of a building located immediately behind the current headquarters of the Kilmadock Community Development Trust.</p> <p>The Trust had previously decided not to acquire the building when it was available for sale as it lacked confidence and experience at the time. However, when the building became available again, they proceeded with purchasing it.</p> <p>It is hoped that the building can provide space for local businesses or entrepreneurs, as well as for use by groups to undertake a range of facilities. The group has so far made the building secure and water tight and has prepared a business plan which sets out how improvements will be funded and undertaken. Progress has been quite slow to date, partly because the group felt it was important to get the planning process right before proceeding onto implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition of a building that will be used to provide economic / business accommodation combined with community facilities. • Slow progress following acquisition due to business planning process. • Close fit of project with wider aspirations for community as a whole. • Community recognised responsibilities attached to ownership and deferred acquisition until they had become more experienced and confident.
Laide and Aultbea community woodland (covered over 3 years)	<p>Acquisition of woodland to provide improved woodland management and allow for community access to the area.</p> <p>Initial work to improve access through construction of paths etc. was undermined when extensive storm damage took place in early 2005.</p> <p>The group has since worked hard to restructure the project. A rescue plan 'the Phoenix Initiative' was devised in order to deal with the fallen timber in as efficient a way as possible.</p> <p>Removal of timber has now been completed and the group are therefore aiming to undertake extensive replanting. This will effectively speed up initial objectives relating to woodland restructuring, replanting with native broadleaf species and other environmental improvements.</p> <p>The group has managed to remain solvent. Costs of removing wind blown timber were reduced by felling and removing more higher quality timber</p> <p>Access to the woodland has been curtailed by necessary operational restrictions, but will now be more actively promoted.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initially good progress, slowed by external factors (major storm damage in Jan 2005) • Continued leadership from group of committed and skilled Directors • Considerable work to keep public involved in project, although practical work often undertaken by small group of Directors • Extensive practical skills in forestry management have been gained by directors • The group has worked hard to spread this understanding of forestry operations to ensure they retained support during felling and timber export • High expectations for the future of the project – viewed as having an important role for local people and visitors, thereby supporting the wider economy of the area. • Overall increased confidence despite setbacks along the way.
Loch Katrine (covered in first year)	<p>SLF Technical Assistance grants received to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cover legal fees incurred when becoming a Company Limited by Guarantee with Charitable Status cover valuation of Garrison Farm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project did not progress past the “technical assistance” stage. • The Garrison Farm bid was won by the RSPB. The Trust now works in partnership with them to promote the interests of members • The Trust also works in partnership with the Forestry Commission, who won the bid to manage the catchment estate • 65 members (80% of the local population)
Morvern Community Development Company (covered over 3 years)	<p>Acquisition of 1.2 hectares of amenity land and village war memorial in Loch Aline</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main project completed and all original objectives achieved

Project	Overview	Key points
North Harris Community Steering Group/North Harris Trust (covered over 3 years)	<p>Major land purchase of the North Harris estate with range of estate management and community activities. The initial purchase was almost 23,000 hectares, the largest land area purchased</p> <p>Later went on to purchase the Seaforth Estate.</p> <p>Development Grant later acquired to employ a development officer and administrator to facilitate the management and development of the project for the first three years</p> <p>Planning permission received from six plots of housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company now working on a range of other community initiatives • Development company has re-focused its activities after they decided that they were spreading themselves too thin • MCDC is able to generate income from a previous project that involved the acquisition of the local petrol station. Fundraising activities have also been carried out. • Membership has increased from 65 to 72 and there is a growing emphasis on community planning • A period without a development officer illustrated the importance of such a role • Continued to make steady progress, with additional land purchase and planning permission for housing • Development is taking longer than anticipated, with a large area and dispersed population • Heavy emphasis on planning, with an estate plan and development plan almost completed. Confidence that there will be significant benefits over time • Focussing on assisting the community to build capacity themselves, rather than the Trust taking on the running of businesses • Wind turbines now a focus for generating income and sustainability • The Trust has 430 members
North Ronaldsay Trust (covered over 3 years)	<p>The project involves the North Ronaldsay Trust acquiring North Ronaldsay Lighthouse Buildings. Following acquisition the Trust will renovate the properties to provide a number of new facilities on the island.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first two phases of the five phase project are now almost complete • Operation has continued, with the woollen mill trading at a steady level and some further planning for future development • In addition, the Trust has gone on to carry out a large number of other projects, such as purchasing the New Kirk and establishing a cycle project, and a range of other spin out projects are currently being considered • Strong benefits in terms of social cohesion and businesses and job opportunities being created • The project has a membership of 160, including all residents on the island and other supporters from all over the world
Oban War and Peace Museum (last year only)	<p>To assist with the acquisition of the ground floor of the Oban Times building</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four of the original eight aims have been met in full and good progress has been made towards achieving the others

Project	Overview	Key points
Pairc Trust (covered in last 2 years)	First technical assistance grant put towards a feasibility study, community consultation and a budget for professional fees. Second technical assistance grant given to enable the Pairc Trust to extend the duration of their existing Animateur project. Third technical assistance grant received to enable the Pairc Trust to benefit from the services of a solicitor as they further progress their potential community buyout of Pairc Estate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition completed, refurbishment carried out and museum re-opened in new premises • They currently have 60 'friends of the museum' • Acquisition bid being made under the Crofting Community Right to Buy, as contained in part iii of the Land Reform Act (Scotland) 2003 • Acquisition still to be achieved and progress has been slower than the Trust would have liked. The project is 'stuck' until a decision is made by the land court as to whether or not the buyout can go ahead • Legal barriers are proving expensive • Strong community engagement • Ambitions for developing a number of socio-economic projects • The Trust has 278 members
Shetland Bus Friendship Society (covered in last 2 years)	The purchase of premises in order to relocate the museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition completed and funding package now being put together to raise money to cover the costs of conversion • Strong community support • Potential to generate new income streams through the museum and shop • The society has around 300 members
Strathfillan Community Company (covered over 3 years)	The acquisition of a 1.1ha parcel of land within the village of Tyndrum. It is a piece of sheltered woodland and is greatly in need of active management. Development grant later received to provide three years revenue funding for a development officer to drive forward the implementation of the Trust's three year strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many local events for fundraising and education and work with youth club • Expectations have been exceeded and they have gone on to purchase further land since the shelterbelt acquisition. • Management of the woodland, including replanting has been carried out. Further progress has been slowed by the wait for funding agreements • More widely the Trust works on a range of other projects. • There is a recognition that the Trust must begin generating its own income and a number of ideas are currently being explored • The Trust has 90 members
Whitefield Loch (covered over 3 years)	<p>The project firstly focused on acquiring the loch for use by the community of Glenluce. The project originally aimed to improve access to the loch for people of all abilities.</p> <p>Disabled angling platforms and paths have been put in place. Some clearance of vegetation has been undertaken to facilitate access, and new car parking areas have been constructed. The loch has been stocked for</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The leadership of this project has changed since acquisition. LUCE 2000, which was originally leading the work has disbanded and the Penfield Trust, which was planning to take over the project has also ceased to exist. As a result, the loch is now in the hands of the community council and the Glenluce Angling Club. • The group set relatively practical objectives at the outset and has not

Project	Overview	Key points
	angling, funded through the sale of permits.	been overly ambitious. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adjoining land owners have undertaken complementary projects, with FCS working with a local mental health charity to support the creation of a woodland garden.• Events have been well attended by anglers from all over Dumfries and Galloway and the loch is regularly used by local people.

Source: SQW evaluation

4: Social benefits

Introduction

- 4.1 The most immediate benefits and those that the community are most aware of have been social – particularly capacity building and strengthening of social networks – but there are also important benefits from improvements in quality of life through access to new facilities. Several projects are targeted at specific groups, young or older people or people with disabilities. These provide amenities that would not be within communities otherwise.

Key findings

- A strong social infrastructure is part of supporting economic development. Communities that work well and develop capacity and networks are more likely to develop new business ideas and to attract new residents. It is more likely that individuals will choose to set up businesses in a social climate that is supportive, where networks are strong and there is a sense of confidence.
- Almost all the projects had generated substantial community participation and the final visits demonstrated that in most cases this had been maintained.
- Ownership of the asset was considered by the development officers to have been very important in getting the level of engagement that has been achieved and in their ability to make progress
- The sense of empowerment cannot be quantified but the ownership of the land in the two larger community buyouts in particular was reported to be very important and this view was supported in discussions with the community.
- There were many examples of those engaged in the projects developing softer skills such as negotiating, reaching consensus, managing meetings, delegating and leading, but also some practical skills such as designing communication materials, using spreadsheets, book-keeping, public speaking and project monitoring.
- One of the common themes across most of the projects has been the explicit link with local schools. This reflects the importance of the funded project within the community and the involvement of younger people.
- There are good examples of projects that increased access to specific groups within the communities.
- In the bigger land purchases security of tenure has been one of the first and most important improvements in improving the quality of life for residents.
- The report estimates that there are over 5,500 people involved in the supported community groups.

Context

- 4.2 A strong social infrastructure can support economic development in rural communities. Communities that work well, develop capacity and networks, are more likely to develop new business ideas and to attract new residents. Although social benefits are harder to quantify, they make a direct difference to the quality of life, outlook and confidence of community residents. Capturing these benefits is hard and knowing how they will change life in the future is even harder, but they undoubtedly provide the basis for stronger and more self sufficient communities.
- 4.3 The links between social capital and aspects of economic development are set out in a number of reports. There are two related points:
- The role that social infrastructure plays in attracting and retaining population
 - The role that strengthening social capital (social organisation such as networks, formal and informal groups, norms and trust) play in providing a supportive environment for entrepreneurship
- 4.4 The first is that social infrastructure is important in retaining and growing population. A community is unlikely to attract new residents without adequate housing as well as other community facilities. European Commission research on entrepreneurship and the rural periphery identifies social infrastructure as a factor in supporting economic and business development. It highlights its role in attracting and retaining population and specifically people with entrepreneurial qualities⁴
- 4.5 Research also indicates that most rural entrepreneurs are in-migrants, whereas most urban entrepreneurs are locally born (Keeble 1992⁵). In-migrants are also more likely than those born locally to be concentrated in more externally orientated sectors (Centre for Rural Economy, 2000a⁶). Economic development will benefit directly through attracting new residents. Many of the Land Fund projects relate directly to improvements in community facilities.
- 4.6 A second aspect supported by research links the development of social capital to economic development. A report to DEFRA⁷ concludes that there is an “increasing recognition of the contribution of social capital to the economic performance of rural areas (Amin 1999; Bryden et al 2004; Colman 1988; Fukuyama 1995; Krippner 2001; Putnam 1993; Porter 1990; Portes 1998; Warren 2000; van den Bor et al 1997).”
- 4.7 Of these, Putnam’s work⁸ in particular draws a conclusion that while social capital is not sufficient to explain economic performance, it is nevertheless a necessary ingredient for successful economic development as it enhances the benefits of investment in other forms of capital.

⁴ European Commission (2003), *The future of Europe's rural periphery, the role of Entrepreneurship in responding to employment problems and social marginalisation*,

⁵ Keeble D. (1993) ‘*Small Firm Creation, Innovation and Growth and the Urban-Rural Shift*’

⁶ Centre for Rural Economy (2000a) *Rural Microbusinesses in NE England: Final Survey Results*,

⁷ DEFRA (2005) *Determinants of Relative Economic Performance of Rural Areas, 2005*

⁸ Putnam, R. (1993) *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*

- 4.8 Care needs to be taken with how the benefits are interpreted. It is easy to underestimate the importance for small communities of strengthening networks and building social capital. The research above suggests that its strength within communities is not just important for its own sake (making a contribution to quality of life) it is also a necessary underpinning for economic development. Without a strong, confident and connected community, it is far more difficult to identify and realise economic opportunity. It is more likely that individuals will choose to set up businesses in a social climate that is supportive, where networks are strong and there is a sense of confidence.
- 4.9 For businesses that do set up these factors are also likely to impact on their sustainability and performance. Because many of these communities are in remote rural locations, businesses and their fortunes are closely bound, relying on each other when there may be few alternatives. Strengthening communities in the way that many of these projects do may, consequently, impact on the sustainability of its businesses and the economic health of the area. These are subtle effects and will take time to become more apparent.
- 4.10 In urban areas access to expertise, advice and support is often taken for granted. In rural and remote communities, social networks are arguably more important where it is difficult to travel to find alternatives. The examples from Islay, Gigha, North Ronaldsay and Birse in particular highlight how, once the Trusts have the strength, confidence and critical mass of support, they can go on to develop a much wider range of projects. Where this works, the SLF funding can legitimately be seen as kick starting a much more substantial process.
- 4.11 One of the impressive aspects of Gigha was the substantial amount of capacity building that had taken place within the community. With so many residents involved in the management of projects, there was a strong understanding of how the island worked and the opportunities that existed. The high degree of consensus on development plans was also an example of how well the group was working with only limited training for the directors. Although Gigha has direct evidence of increased economic activity, it was also clear that the increase in population and the attractiveness of the island as a place to live and work was related to the strengthened sense of community.
- 4.12 The key point from this is that stronger and more vibrant communities are an important precursor to economic development. In rural and more remote communities, unless there is a good social infrastructure, economic growth will be more difficult to achieve. One of the strengths of the asset ownership model is that it directly supports this social infrastructure and this in turn can increase community engagement and animation, and plays a part in encouraging entrepreneurial attitudes and ultimately economic development.

Social benefits

- 4.13 In this section we have grouped the social benefits under seven headings:
- Engagement and participation
 - Empowerment
 - Skills and capacity building

- Education
- Access to facilities
- Security of tenure
- Inclusion and social networks.

Engagement and participation

- 4.14 Almost all the projects had generated substantial community participation. This was high at the early stages, but the final visits demonstrated that in most cases this had been maintained. Memberships of a number of the Trusts had risen. In some of the smaller communities, virtually every household had been represented. The level of engagement seems to vary depending on the level of activity. If things are happening, more people want to get involved. Where there are delays, engagement can tail off.
- 4.15 From Strathfillan, the project development officer summed up the community's involvement saying *'there is an increased confidence and experience that people get from active involvement in important projects that directly influence their community. It is not just the achieved projects on the ground, but also the feeling of making a difference.'*
- 4.16 One of the early concerns for community managed projects is whether the initial levels of involvement would continue. The evidence from this study, after a number of years, is that this has not been a significant problem and many of the projects are four or five years old.
- 4.17 Another interesting finding is that rather than it simply being a case of whether or not a community is engaged, we found that the relationship between the community and the Trust matures, becoming more sophisticated. Interest and involvement becomes focussed on aspects of the projects where it is of relevance rather than in the project per se, as would be the case at the start. Depending on the level of trust in the board, communities are happy to let members lead, as long as they feel they still have sufficient influence. This was the message from development officers and from members of the community where they were interviewed.
- 4.18 The level of engagement and participation remains central to the objectives of this approach and is one of the reasons why asset ownership is considered to offer such an effective development model. In the majority of cases, development officers considered that the ownership of the asset has made a difference and that involvement would not have been as strong without it.

Empowerment

- 4.19 The level of participation links directly to the concept of empowerment. The transfer of ownership changes the relationship between the community and the institutions and funders with which it deals. Clearly the extent of this effect depends on the type of project and its scale. The two big land purchases, where a large proportion of the SLF investment has gone, reported substantial impacts anecdotally. On Gigha the sense of empowerment was reflected in all the residents we spoke to. During the course of the consultations one Gigha resident

claimed that the effect of the community buy-out was “like a big cloud lifting from the island”. On Harris, residents also referred to a positive impact and the optimism in the community is reflected in further investment. The project development officer reported that owning the estate has just “opened up everything” to the community.

- 4.20 Empowerment cannot easily be measured, but throughout our programme of interviews, the fact that members of the community, the directors of the Trusts that have been set up, were confidently talking about agreements with local authorities, housing associations, the Forestry Commission, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), and others, suggests that transfer of ownership has genuinely given a sense of power to at least those closest to the project and probably many others involved.

Skills and capacity building

- 4.21 The opportunities to exercise this empowerment lead to the development of skills and engagement more widely with the community and others outside it. Many of the skills developed are informal and come from being involved in the whole process of the transfer of ownership and subsequent management of the project.
- 4.22 The benefits of this are difficult to measure, but the results should be a more connected and better equipped community. This is part of the social infrastructure that helps foster stronger economic development. The evidence from the interviews and from a similar evaluation of the Community Land Unit in 2005, suggests that those engaged in the project were developing softer skills such as negotiating, reaching consensus, managing meetings, delegating and leading, but also some practical skills such as designing communication materials, using spreadsheets, book-keeping, public speaking and project monitoring.
- 4.23 There appeared to be less formal training although the directorship training done by a number of communities has been extremely helpful in reinforcing the importance and responsibilities of taking on the directorship of a Community Trust. There is very likely to be demand and interest in this type of training among new communities and certainly the need for guidance as to where it can be found.

Education

- 4.24 One of the common themes across most of the projects has been the explicit link with local schools in the development of the project and as users. The woodland projects in particular all have close links to schools that include events, tree planting and interpretation. Auldearn is planned as a facility linked to the school, although there have been difficulties in agreeing what this should be. In Comrie, school children have been encouraged to get involved in planning by submitting entries to a competition. The group believe that getting young people involved in the project at an early stage has encouraged children to take some sense of ownership and pride in the area. They are using their ideas as the focus of the interactive interpretations and projects will hopefully elicit ownership, discourage vandalism and a sense of community. A similar process has been used in Strathfillan. One of the first plans for the woodland purchased by the Crossgates community is to host school trips and encourage each

child to plant their own tree. Gordon Woodland has a full and strong engagement with schools and Dunnet, for example, has had over 1,000 school children on visits.

Access to facilities

- 4.25 Many of the projects related to buildings were to improve access either to the community as a whole or specific groups. The Birse Church Hall can now be used by the community more regularly rather than travel into Aboyne. Whitefield Loch has increased the number buying fishing permits, the football pitch at Port Charlotte is used regularly by the local community and the rest of the island, the visitor centre will also be a local facility. Retaining the Care Home in Killin and the social facilities in Ballantrae add substantially to the quality of life for the elderly in these communities and their families. The woodlands are important local facilities and often focus on attracting young people and developing forestry skills. The development of paths and cycle routes will also represent a new infrastructure, much of which is being constructed with volunteer time and resources gifted from local businesses. Crossgates, for example, has agreements with local contractors to build a car park and provide materials for paths in return for allowing the land to be used temporarily.

Security of tenure

- 4.26 In the bigger land purchases improving security of tenure is one of the first and most obvious improvements in quality of life for residents. On Gigha this has been one of the most immediate benefits, allowing improvements to be made and releasing new confidence and investment. In North Harris it is hoped that new tenure arrangements will also generate optimism and retain population.
- 4.27 For communities, ownership of assets builds confidence and encourages investment in a way that would not happen otherwise. In Birse, ownership of the old school has allowed the community to invest in facilities and physical projects on North Ronaldsay, Killin and Ballantrae have also led to long term investment that would not have been possible otherwise. The refurbishment of property in Kinlockbervie is also an example of improving tenure to attract key workers into a rural community.

Inclusion and social networks

- 4.28 For the elderly, the Ballantrae and Killin are projects which allow people to remain within their community and support intergenerational links. The play park, part of the project on Islay, is a meeting place for parents who might otherwise find social interaction more difficult and the football pitch provides a facility that involves many in the community and brings the islanders together. Several projects will help special needs access. The paths in Comrie will provide disabled access and the original proposals at Whitefield Loch are intended to provide access to fishing.
- 4.29 The importance of supporting social networks is also important in retaining and attracting populations to rural areas. An improved social environment is likely to help encourage former residents to return and new people to move to the area.

4.30 Most of the projects could claim that the funding support and the purchase of the asset have contributed to this. Management of decision making processes and the projects themselves will bring people together. In many cases meetings and fund raising events are frequent. In Dunnet, the woodland is “self-policed” by the community (in terms of litter, activities and so on). Because they feel it is their woodland they want to take care of it. The Oban War and Peace museum provides a social activity for 57 volunteers who work at the museum.

Examples of social benefits from case studies

4.31 Table 4-1 sets out the main social benefits reported by each project.

Table 4-1: Social benefits reported

Project	Social benefits
Arrochar Pit Stop Diner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community meeting space provided on temporary basis (pending village hall). Increasingly used by groups e.g. Scouts, Youth clubs • Community business established, building confidence • Community opportunities perceived to be increasing as a result of income generated by project • Community access to internet connection now provided (only public access in village)
Auldearn Community Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gradual collaboration within the community to progress the project • Increased scope for shared recreation resource within community
Birse Community Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10-15% of households are involved in BCT's activities month by month • The purchase of the old school helped to secure BCT's future by providing them with a secure long term base • Secured community facility in the form of a community hall. Continuing and increasing use of the church hall as a community facility • Community identity benefits associated with purchase of the saw mill
Colonsay Community Development Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant growth in confidence in this small, remote community • Currently discussing scope to develop croft houses on the croft sites
Comrie Millennium Footpath Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of community • Educational benefits – primary school and cubs involved in planting the wildflower meadow and undertaking woodland studies • Members of the board have given talks at funders' seminars • Partnership working established • Training – one of the board members went on a FE Way Warden Course and another has learnt to use Computer Aided Design (CAD) • All-access path provides local area with another amenity
Crossgates Community Woodland Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major community engagement in part as a result of extensive ballot and well attended meetings • Continuing involvement through planning • Capacity building mainly for directors and management • Maintenance of an important social amenity • Plan to use land as a focus for future community and educational activities
Dalmally Community Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing the community together • Once the projects are completed, it is hoped that further social benefits will arise, e.g. through educational and sporting activities

Project	Social benefits
Dornie Community Projects Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community confidence grew due to acquisition. Since then further applications to BIG have been approved, suggesting the project may have contributed to improved skills and confidence on part of community
Dunnet Forestry Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared community responsibility for the forest brings people together. Over 500 people attended the 2006 open day • Membership has increased from 350 members in 2004 to 430 members in 2006. • There is a feeling that the community values the forest more now because they can see what has been done and the number of volunteers also continues to grow • Forestry-related training provision including dry stane dyke construction • Recreational benefits – Improved amenities in the area, including public events and open days • Educational benefits – arising through school and group visits. Over 1,000 school children have participated in woodland activities • Contacts have been established with other organisations
Gigha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The population has increased from 98 to 151, with high growth of younger and working age people • Major housing stock improvements and growing demand for housing (9 refurbished and 39 to go) • New affordable housing construction (18 new homes constructed by a housing association) • Security of tenure for those in rented properties • Optimism and confidence as a result of ownership • Evidence of considerable capacity building formally through director training and informally from working on committees • Number of school children increased significantly and older ones can return to the island each day • High level of community engagement with the Trust and decision making • Large number of committees and opportunities for community to take responsibility • Continuing programme of fund raising and events
Gordon Community Woodland Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access has improved • The area has an additional amenity as a result of the project • Strong links established with other organisations, such as the Borders Forest Trust • Educational benefits arising through field trips • The project has created confidence in the community to undertake more projects such as building a play park
The Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making it easier for key incoming community workers to establish a good local base on a temporary basis • A teacher and his family were the first occupiers of the house. This helped to support local services by helping provide staff and contributing to the school role
Iomairt Chille-Chomain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a much improved playing surface for the teams using the pitch. • Opportunities for social interaction, and a sense of shared ownership of the site. • The group are keen to ensure that local people continue to recognise their role as part of the project • Provides social inclusion benefits, encouraging social interaction and providing scope for physical activities • Provides a route linking the village with the site which can be used by people of

Project	Social benefits
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all ages and abilities. • Education and awareness raising amongst local people and visitors to the park
Killin Care Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of care facilities for people within local rural community • Reduced travel time and costs for visitors to care home (friends and family of residents) • Social continuity within fragile rural community – retaining older population and so facilitating intergenerational interaction and support
Kilmadock Community Development Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building acquired and feasibility study undertaken which identifies scope to support community projects • Community working together to develop facility as part of wider plans and initiatives
Laide and Aultbea community woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased knowledge amongst directors of forestry sector has been spread amongst wider community • General confidence arising from ownership of asset and growth in resilience as group responded positively to the challenge posed by storm damage
Loch Katrine Community Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased community confidence and a feeling of involvement • Solid relationship established between the Trust and the community • New skills developed, such as management, communication and organisational skills • Improved sharing of information
Morvern Community Development Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The footpath and picnic site provide extra amenities in the area • Access has improved and a safer pedestrian route has been provided through the village • Anecdotal evidence suggests that the path is well used by people in the area as well as visitors • The path has built on the success of the petrol station and there is now a slow awakening that “things are possible”. Confidence has increased and other projects, such as renewable energy and the sinking of wrecks are now being looked at • Engaging the community – 98 members of the local community were involved in a recent community planning exercise • Extra parking facilities available • Residents are now carrying out their own maintenance of the plot opposite their houses and there is a sense of civic pride in the area. The picnic site has been improved • Partnership working with the social club on the joint facilities project down at the pier
North Harris Community Steering Group/North Harris Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reported increase in the confidence in the community • At the time of the purchase, membership of the Trust was 340. This has now grown to approximately 430 members • Thirty people attended the AGM in February 2006 • Without the project, it is thought the population decline would have continued and the landlord would not have done anything to improve the situation • New partnerships have been established with, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edinburgh University Officer Training Corps – community project • John Muir Trust • SNH • Clan MacLeod • Volunteer days received a good turn out • Planning permission for six plots for housing – in six months, land for ten new

Project	Social benefits
	homes should be ready
North Ronaldsay Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huge confidence boost for the community • The projects have offered an opportunity to preserve local history for future generations • The projects are creating access for all to historic buildings • Educational – information boxes are available to Orkney schools. In addition, an education room is being set up, with a school visit lined up for next March • Graduate placement organised for a textiles student at the yarn business • Island development plan is currently being worked on • The projects are helping to put life back into the community and it is hoped that this will impact positively on the population • Exchange visits made to Fair Isle and Papa Westray
Oban War and Peace Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides volunteers with a social activity and provides a community space • Educational benefits – school visits • Strong community support • Security of tenure has been achieved • Exchange visits have been made with SWRI and other clubs and museums • Training – volunteers have attended courses run by the Scottish Museums Council • Preservation of local history
Pairc Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project has brought the community together • New skills developed through the mapping exercise • Self-confidence and sense of community empowerment is growing due to the bid. Concerns from the Trust that an unsuccessful buyout may have a dampening effect on the community's motivation for further projects
Shetland Bus Friendship Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better facilities for educational and local history activities • Strong community interest and support for the project • Cataloguing museum collection ensures preservation of local history • The museum provides volunteers with a social activity • Relationship established with Shetland's museum liaison officer • Those involved had learnt a lot about project management and developing a museum • Potential for more social benefits, particularly in the form of educational benefits once the building has been converted
Strathfillan Community Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good relationships developed with agencies • Educational benefits – a Battle of Dalrigh event was held for the local school children • Security of tenure has led to a strong sense of ownership amongst the community • Social events, such as the Christmas event have been held • Community has more control over what the land is used for • Learning and networking events – e.g. forty foresters were taken around the woodland
Whitefield Loch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing angling rights and recreation opportunities for enjoyment by the local community • Collaboration to undertake environmental improvements, including involvement of mental health charity and local individuals in the project, specifically to provide recreation opportunities for disabled people

Source: SQW SLF evaluation

Social benefits evidence from the CLU evaluation survey

- 4.32 Between June and October 2005, SQW undertook an evaluation of the Community Land Unit for HIE. This research covered CLU's support of community asset acquisition in the Highlands and Islands. A large part of this work was a major survey of CLU supported projects. The majority of these projects were also supported through the SLF funding. We have found that the communities cannot easily distinguish between the impact of the HIE and the SLF support, which is delivered and considered as a single package. Consequently the benefits that were reported by these projects are attributable to both HIE and the SLF. It was also clear that in most cases the projects could not have gone ahead if either of these elements had been missing.
- 4.33 It was agreed with HIE that, because the SLF supported projects represented a subset of the communities they were working with, the results would also be of interest to BIG. With this in mind, the work was set up to complement, rather than overlap with this evaluation. It therefore makes sense to use the results of the subset of the SLF projects to provide evidence of the types and level of benefit that communities are experiencing. However, the survey was carried out one year ago and additional benefits may have arisen since then as projects have progressed.
- 4.34 The study found that the benefits most frequently reported were in the engagement and participation of the community, the sense of neighbourhood and ownership, and access to facilities (Table 4-2). This reflects the pattern apparent among the cases covered in this evaluation, but is helpful (and reassuring) to see this within a bigger sample.

Table 4-2: Social benefits: the % of the 52 SLF supported projects reporting major impact

Type of benefit	% reporting major impact
Engagement/ participation of community as a whole	58%
Community Empowerment – sense of neighbourhood and ownership	54%
Quality of life – Access to facilities or amenities	46%
Strengthening social networks	37%
Fundraising	35%
Quality of life – Security of tenure	35%
Inclusion of hard to reach groups e.g. elderly, single parent families, disabled, low income	31%
Skills and capacity building of individuals and groups	31%
Education for all	13%

Source: Evaluation of CLU, 2005, SQW

- 4.35 It is impossible to try to quantify many of the benefits that have been reported, but it is possible to make some estimates about some of the indicators. Using only the 52 SLF supported cases in the CLU survey and applying the results to the 188 SLF projects we can calculate some broad indicative measures. The key outputs are:

- 25 of the 52 SLF supported projects set up new community trusts as part of the project
- On average 30 people are involved in managing and supporting a project – an average of 9 directly involved in management.

4.36 Applying the percentages from the Table 5-2 to the total of 188 projects gives the results shown in Table 4-3. For example, the survey indicates that 54% of the groups responding to the survey reported that the project had a major impact on community empowerment. Extrapolating to the total 188 projects supported, this means that an estimated 102 will have benefited from a major impact.

Table 4-3: Estimates of impact based on community groups reporting a major impact on specific types of benefit

Indicator	Estimated number of groups	Estimated number of people
Total community groups	188	5,640
	Number with a major impact	
Community Empowerment – sense of neighbourhood and ownership	102	-
Community participation	109	-
Skills and capacity (major effect) ⁹ no. of people	70	2,100
Strengthened social networks ¹	58	1,740
Impact on inclusion of hard to reach groups ¹	58	-
New community Trusts ¹⁰ set up	90	-

Source: SQW estimates based on SLF cases within CLU evaluation survey 2005

4.37 With an average of 30 residents directly involved in developing the projects (described as project management, regular involvement and ad hoc involvement), these benefits are likely to impact on a relatively large number of people. Across the full 188 groups this would represent 5,640 people. This excludes the full communities that may benefit.

4.38 For example, if we assumed that the project has had a major impact on skills and capacity building in 58 groups, this is likely to impact on an estimated 1,740 people. On the same basis, the impact on social networks is considered to be “major” in 70 projects, which if this includes an average of the 30 people engaged directly in the project this would relate to 2,100 people.

Conclusions on social benefits

4.39 The analysis of social benefits is fairly broad. The benefits that are reported are frequently anecdotal and lack quantifiable evidence and yet are possibly the most important outcomes. The interviews with the project development officers and the directors provide an indication of the types of activities that are taking place but it is more difficult to gauge the extent of

⁹ Assumes that the average project has 30 people involved in some capacity and that they are the main beneficiaries. In practice these projects will have much wider effects.

¹⁰ Based on survey data that 48% of projects included the set up of a new Trust.

these benefits without more detailed community work. It is clear that the process of community ownership and the subsequent delivery of plans and activities have engaged significant numbers of people. The survey of projects gives an indication of this, with an estimate of over 5,500 directly participating and major effects on social networks, skills and capacity building impacting on several thousand people. The experience of the development officers themselves and the directors has contributed to their own skills and more broadly to the social capital within the community.

4.40 We also conclude that the scale of participation and the strength of the project's effects are likely to be a result of the transfer of ownership, rather than just management. Visiting the larger projects, gives a real sense of the confidence and opportunities that the communities have developed and has been brought about through ownership.

4.41 It is doubtful that the reported level of participation could have taken place without the ownership of the assets. This would not have been possible without the SLF support. SLF has therefore helped in two ways: through the projects it has helped to strengthen social infrastructure and, secondly, through the direct provision of improvements in local facilities and amenity. Of the 23 projects covered, all have experienced social benefits of some kind, ranging from “civic pride” through to improved access to facilities. Ultimately though the bigger projects have led to the fundamental changes in the outlook and confidence reported by project development officers. The key points are:

- high level of sustained community engagement
- a high level of consensus in decision making
- large number of projects reporting social benefits
- evidence that, despite setbacks, projects have proved to be robust.

5: Economic benefits

Introduction

- 5.1 Economic benefits are frequently the most sought after in justifying public expenditure. They reflect the benefits of projects in a way that allows a direct comparison with a financial investment. Economic benefits are usually presented as the additional employment created and the income or gross value added that is generated in the economy.
- 5.2 These measures are more easily captured in projects that have a direct and immediate impact on the commercial sector, for example, business support projects. Although the Scottish Land Fund does aim to support economic development through its objective to “improve opportunities and reduce disadvantage”, the measurement of economic benefit can only effectively been done over a reasonable length of time and in comparison with where the project started. In this respect the baseline data that was collected for some of the larger projects will provide a good indicator of, for example, employment. To date, few projects had been able to monitor economic changes in their community.

Key findings

- The most striking employment impact has been on Gigha. The number of FTE jobs on the island has increased from 50 to 77 and there is virtually no unemployment.
- Employment across many of the projects have been created through the use of local contractors
- There are also good examples of new businesses. There are 11 new businesses on Gigha, the Killin Care Trust operates a community business as do the Pitstop Diner, the museums, visitor centre on Islay and the two new businesses on North Ronaldsay
- Generating new income has become increasingly important in ensuring the sustainability of the projects and most now have some form of regular income
- Excluding the ongoing funding of Development Officers, the projects covered are now largely sustainable although they will continue to seek money for specific projects and further development.
- Evidence from the SLF supported projects in the CLU survey in 2005 found that:
 - 25% of Trusts reported that the project has had a major impact on developing fresh income streams
 - 17% that it has had a major impact on employment 10% a major impact on new businesses

- The SLF objective was to create opportunities rather than direct economic benefit per se and we conclude that the level of participation and the types of activities being developed are evidence of new opportunities.

Context

- 5.3 The analysis here reports more generally on the objective of “improving opportunities” and in this sense we have included training opportunities or new activities that will enhance the income and potential to earn income that the projects have created.
- 5.4 The importance of these asset ownership projects to the economic wellbeing of the communities is not simply in their direct employment, but in helping to underpin the cohesion and capacity of the community and thereby create an environment within which new business ideas can flourish. The economic benefits should not be seen in isolation. They reflect the progress that has been made to date in generating new activity, but are only a part of the wider changes that projects are expected to bring.

Economic benefits

- 5.5 This section considers four elements of economic benefit with some examples and Table 5-1 sets out examples from each project
- Employment
 - Income
 - New businesses.

Employment

- 5.6 The most striking employment impact has been on Gigha. The number of FTE jobs on the island has increased from 50 to 77 and there is virtually no unemployment. Given that prior to the buy out this number was falling, at least 27 jobs have been supported. In North Harris, 22 seasonal jobs were reported as safeguarded as a result of the land purchase along with eight jobs at the Castle and Hatchery. These assume that a different landowner would not have continued these activities. The management team there has also increased in number to 2.8 FTEs, which includes resources to manage the Loch Seaforth Estate. Part of this employment (19%) is supported through estate business rather than public support.
- 5.7 The Killin Care Trust employs 18 staff (a proportion of which are safeguarded rather than created), again this assumes that an alternative owner would have used the building or another purpose. The Pit Stop Diner employs five people and the businesses on North Ronaldsay provide employment for two people plus four or five knitters, some of whom are based off the island. At Port Charlotte, new employment will be created at the Visitor Centre. There are three part time jobs at Strathfillan, Dunnet now employs a development officer. The Oban Museum employs one person and the proposed museum in Shetland plans one or two full time posts. The Pairc Trust employs a full time administrator and Morvern employs a development officer and a further maintenance person.

- 5.8 Employment opportunities are also created through the use of local contractors. For example, the Gordon Community Woodland uses 10 – 15 local companies or individuals, a high proportion of Birse Community Trust work uses local people, as do most of the other projects. Much of this work is ad hoc and related to specific maintenance or project work. The building and refurbishment of housing on Gigha is being undertaken by a local consortium of construction companies (from Kintyre rather than the island).
- 5.9 Where projects have resulted in employment benefits, this has also brought significant management challenges for community groups. In Killin, the relatively skilled group of directors struggled for some time in appointing and retaining an appropriately skilled, motivated and experienced manager. In Arrochar, the group felt that their early progress was hampered considerably by poor management of the café and in Laide and Aultbea the group are very aware that their plans in the future to recruit a community woodland officer will be dependent on the availability of an appropriate candidate.
- 5.10 At the same time, however, most of the groups that have generated employment benefits also appear to be relatively good employers. In most cases where existing staff have been retained, the groups have worked hard to improve working conditions and pay. In both Killin and Arrochar ongoing staff training has also been provided and the projects have successfully recruited local people, providing high quality year round employment in communities where low paid tourism sector seasonal work tends to dominate.

New businesses

- 5.11 The biggest impact on new businesses within the cases covered in the evaluation has been on Gigha where an estimated 11 new businesses have started since the land purchase (and would not have done so otherwise). These include the recent opening of a new fish farm and craft shop and gallery. The spirit of new economic activity is captured in the Prince's Scottish Youth Business Trust entrepreneurship award to the owners of the café business that set up after the buy out. The operation of the wind turbines by the community-owned energy subsidiary is another good example of profitable new activity.
- 5.12 Other projects that have been supported are businesses in their own right: the Killin Care Trust, the museums, the Pitstop Diner in Arrochar and two new businesses in North Ronaldsay, '*A Yarn From North Ronaldsay*' and a cycle business. The latter is a community-owned, mini-woollen mill which spins yarn from seaweed-grazing, native sheep and employs one full time and one part time member of staff. Four knitters are also employed through the enterprise (some of whom are based on the mainland).

Income

- 5.13 Generating new income has increasingly become important in ensuring the sustainability of the projects and most now have some form of regular income. On Islay, the visitor centre will be a source of income as will rental from crofts. Other projects rent out property. Birse Community Trust rents business space, North Harris is paid a rent for allowing the erection of a communications mast, from the fish farm rents and shooting rights. There is also evidence of new economic activity with a sizeable new investment in refurbishing an old building.

- 5.14 The tours around the lighthouse and mill on North Ronaldsay generate income as do their businesses. The windfarm on Gigha generates a significant sum for the community. Woodland projects have been selling timber to generate income and Strathfillan is able to lease fishing and grazing rights. In Morvern around £12,000 a year is raised through petrol sales. The Pit Stop Diner also generates income, having recently become profitable. The facilities projects including museums and the Killin Care Trust also generate income to operate sustainably.
- 5.15 There are only a small number of projects that are not generating income in some form. Over the period of the evaluation it has been noticeable that this has become increasingly important to development officers as they seek to ensure that their project becomes sustainable (and to support their own jobs once the Land Fund money ends). Excluding the ongoing funding of Development Officers, the projects covered are now largely sustainable, although they continue to seek money for specific projects and further development.

Table 5-1: Projects and economic benefits

Project	Economic benefits
Arrochar Pit Stop Diner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community business developed and running, with aim of providing income stream to support development of village hall • 5 full time permanent staff employed, as well as casual workers • Staff training provided • Support for tourism role of village – encourages visitors to use facility, stopping off en route. Also supported by raising awareness of diner amongst guests staying in accommodation
Birse Community Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income generated from renting premises in the old school to two local businesses • The Trust uses many local people as contractors • Where possible the Trust pays those working on projects rather than relying on voluntary time – this directly brings income into the community and supports flexible part-time employment.
Colonsay Community Development Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One community business (petrol station) established
Comrie Millennium Footpath Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local contractors are used wherever possible • Income generated through fundraising events
Crossgates Community Woodland Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans to train local unemployed people in maintenance, path building and book keeping • Plans to sell seating and wood products • Arrangements with local farmer to cut meadow
Dalmally Community Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraising activities carried out • Intentions to generate income by using the hall for wedding receptions and outside functions and hiring out the playing field for area and national championships
Dornie Community Projects Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to support local tourism businesses.
Dunnet Forestry Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Trust is now generating money from the project. It has moved on significantly from the situation where removal of timber was costing money, to one where it is generating a small amount of steady income from local sales of wood in the form of timber, domestic firewood (cut and in bags), bulk firewood (in rings) and woodchip • Employment of a development officer and two part time assistants • Local contractors have generated income from the Trust's projects • Fundraising activities have been undertaken by the group

Project	Economic benefits
Gigha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment on the island has increased from 50 FTE jobs to 77 by 2006 • Only 4 people reported as unemployed • 11 new businesses set up and occupation of business units • Princes Scottish Youth Business Trust award for young entrepreneur award • £100,000 of profit a year from wind turbines • Anecdotal report of an increase in the number of yachts and number of visitors (not quantified) • Attracted people with relevant skills to the island • New self catering accommodation • Hotel upgraded and now generating more income (open all year) • Maintained milk production • Planned development of new facilities • Development of Achamore gardens and 2 new jobs
Gordon Community Woodland Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Contractors were used to construct the pond, install the signs, make the benches and carry out strimming and spraying work • Income generated through fundraising
The Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust	<p style="text-align: center;">Assisting the inwards migration of economically active people</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Local contractors use to carry out repair work on the property</p>
Iomairt Chille-Chomain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crofts will provide income for the group and potentially a home for two families from the island • New employment in the visitor centre (1 job) • Potential income from visitor centre facilities • Also provided scope for training of local volunteers.
Killin Care Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment provided for 18 staff (of whom 11 are part time). • Training provided for most staff • Local businesses are used to source supplies for the home
Laide and Aultbea community woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficient project management helped to avoid making loss during harvesting • Hope to provide one full time post • General support for wider economy ultimately by contributing to tourism offer – woodland, possible information centre etc. • Training in practical skills provided to some directors.
Morvern Community Development Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £12,000 generated from the petrol pumps annually • MCDC is seen as a vehicle for levering money in to the local area that could not be accessed by local public bodies • Employment - One FT development officer position has been created along with one PT maintenance worker position
North Harris Community Steering Group/North Harris Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Harris Trust has a good base income, which is supplemented for specific projects • Two FT and one PT positions employed by the Trust • Training in forestry skills, fencing and path maintenance have been provided for 4 people as a result of the woodland schemes being undertaken and it is hoped the project will encourage the creation of local businesses, which in turn would lead to further employment prospects • A local employer now has seven staff and has invested a substantial sum in a derelict building. It is unlikely that this would have happened under the previous arrangement. • Income for the Trust generated through leasing of radio masts and shooting rights. The 2.5MW renewable energy project at Monan has reached the planning stage, and the

Project	Economic benefits
	<p>income derived will make the Trust wholly sustainable and able to reinvest effectively in North Harris</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation on wind turbines being carried out • The community development fund, with a value of £12,000, has supported 11 different projects in the past year • Income received from rental cottages continues and the Trust are about to enter the second phase of development of the cottages • Money has been secured from partnership programmes, for examples the Western Isles Access Programme brought in £40,000 for major long-lasting path work. The Trust is able to attract external money that a private landlord could not • Eco-tourism is becoming a draw for the area
North Ronaldsay Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two businesses have been established – a yarn business and a cycle hire business. The wool workshop involves one self-employed member of staff in the workshop plus four or five knitters, some of whom are based on the mainland. Sales in the shop were over £12,000 in 2006 • Income generated from the tours of mill and lighthouse bring in around £2,500 per annum • Fundraising events have generated over £18,000 to date • One family and two other individuals have moved to the island since the acquisition took place • The number of flights to the island has increased to three a day • Visitor numbers have increased from 300 to 600 p.a. • Further publicity has been generated through the recent BBC programme “Restoration”
Oban War and Peace Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It provides the area with an extra visitor attraction and there has been a steady increase in visitor numbers in recent years • Income generated through the ‘friends of the museum’ scheme, donations and small sales • In August, donations and small sales generated £8-900 per week on average, which was an increase on previous years • One part time development officer position has been created • Local contractors were used for all aspects of the move and refurbishment
Pairc Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment - PT office administrator position created • Potential for further economic benefits if the buyout proves successful
Shetland Bus Friendship Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of a wider Shetland Heritage and Culture Identity initiative which involves marketing such attractions as a single entity • It is estimated that 1-2 FT posts will be created once the project is complete • It is hoped the project will boost tourism, particularly by strengthening links with Norway • Income generated through community fundraising
Strathfillan Community Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three part time jobs have been created • Visitor numbers have increased • Fishing and grazing rights are leased • Income also generated through fundraising events
Whitefield Loch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project is self sufficient as sale of permits and angling events have financed improvements • Possible spin off benefits to local businesses as a result of angling tourists from further afield – but likely to be limited

Source: SQW interviews

Evidence from the CLU evaluation survey

5.16 The CLU survey asked managers to indicate where their project has had a major impact on three economic indicators; income, job creation and new businesses. The results for SLF funded projects are shown in Table 5-2. Although the proportion reporting major impacts on these indicators are not as high as for the social benefits, the results are still significant. A quarter of the projects reported a major impact on fresh income streams and a further 15% a minor impact. One in ten reported a major impact on new business and a further 21%, a minor effect.

5.17 This suggests that around 30% to 45% of the projects receiving the SLF funding report a positive economic impact. Specifically, applied to the total of 188 this would represent between 60 and 85 community groups.

Table 5-2: Percentage of businesses reporting major and minor impacts on economic indicators

	% reporting major impact	% reporting minor impact
Fresh income streams either to local businesses or groups	25%	15%
Job creation	17%	29%
New businesses	10%	21%

Source: adapted from SQW's evaluation of the Community Land Unit, HIE, 2005

5.18 Project managers were asked to report on the direct and indirect effects on employment. In total, across the 52 projects, there were 63 full and part time jobs and an estimated further 29 had been supported indirectly (Table 5-3). In the survey jobs were defined as:

- “direct”– jobs created and funded by the community group
- “indirect” jobs– spillover outputs from the project lead to the creation of new jobs e.g. a new community business is established and employs people, or the project sources supplies and services from an external business which allows the owners of that external business to employ more staff

5.19 We would caveat these figures by stressing that these are the estimates made by the project managers. They may under or overestimate the employment impacts. It is also important to realise that many of the projects were still at a very early stage and several anticipated further direct employment when their project was up and running.

Table 5-3 Employment reported by the 52 SLF projects covered in the CLU survey

Category	Number of jobs
Direct full time	35
Direct part time	28
Indirect full time	23
Indirect part time	6

Source: adapted from SQW's evaluation of the Community Land Unit, HIE, 2005

- 5.20 Twenty four of the 52 projects (46%) considered that they had achieved or are likely to achieve financial independence via securing a sustained income stream in the near future. Sixteen claimed that they would not and 12 did not respond.
- 5.21 These represent gross outputs and do not take into account what might have been achieved anyway. It is also further complicated by the fact that the SLF funding is not the only input into these projects. There are other funders as well as the investment of time through CLU. Ideally, these benefits should be allocated between the supporting activities. In practice this is not possible. The communities find it difficult to differentiate between funding sources and legitimately report that the purchase could not have happened if any element of the support had been absent. Trying to determine attribution between sources would be fairly arbitrary and would fail to recognise that the funding structure and support as a whole is responsible rather than specific elements of it. In this report, the closest we can come to estimating outputs is to use the survey evidence to produce very indicative gross estimates for the SLF.

Economic benefits conclusions

- 5.22 The SLF objective was to create opportunities rather than direct economic benefit per se and we conclude that the scale of participation and the types of activities being developed are evidence of new opportunities. There are, though, significant economic benefits reported, although we would expect these to improve over a longer period. There is evidence that a reasonable number of new businesses and associated employment and in total 40% report some impact on new income streams. These may be relatively modest, but given the scale of the investment and the long term potential are promising. The evaluation found:
- evidence of direct economic benefits through employment, new businesses and income streams, which has grown over the period of the evaluation as development has taken place
 - over the period of the evaluation there has been an increasing awareness of the need to generate income in order to sustain development activity
 - there are examples of using SLF money and assets to lever in other public and charitable funding to support projects (examples in following chapter)
 - long term social and environmental benefits that improve networks and make communities more attractive to live and work in.

6: Environmental benefits

Introduction

- 6.1 Many of the projects have specific environmental objectives and even projects that relate to buildings have been developed in environmentally beneficial ways. Perhaps because the assets are owned by the community, environmental quality seems to have a particularly high priority.

Key findings

- Projects led by communities seem to have a real enthusiasm for ensuring that environmental considerations are a priority. Ownership naturally seems to encourage a greater sense of stewardship
- Many of the projects involve environmental improvements as part of the development of land or property. Most of these have been completed since the start of the evaluation
- There are major improvements in the woodlands, with substantial work undertaken across all the projects covered in the evaluation. Combined, these represent a significant amount of land improvement work, much of which has been done by volunteers
- Across the projects, particularly the woodland examples, there are good examples of wildlife diversity work
- Many projects are considering energy generation projects as a second phase development. This includes wind turbines as well as bio-fuels. These projects can both save money and generate new income
- Where projects have built or refurbished premises, this is usually done to high environmental standards
- Among the SLF supported projects covered in the CLU survey in 2005:
 - 19% of Trusts reported that the project has had a major impact on energy efficiency
 - 42% reported a major impact on landscaping and environmental improvement
 - 37% reported a major impact on protection of heritage
 - 21% reported a major impact on wildlife diversity.

Context

- 6.2 The development of renewable energy sources is an important strand for the larger projects and even for smaller ones, where biomass and energy efficiency have high profiles.

Improving the management of woodland is by its nature environmentally beneficial and many communities have used the projects to develop substantial educational programmes that promote sustainability and biodiversity.

- 6.3 It is also in relation to environmental objectives that there is greatest partnership activity with SNH and the Forestry Commission Scotland. There was evidence from projects such as Morvern that the ownership of the asset had encouraged more pride and greater care with the asset than would otherwise be the case. On Gigha the change in tenure and the payment of rent to the Community Trust instead of the landowner has increased the likelihood of personal investment and better care of their property. Most projects have an environmental element and the reported benefits are set out in Table 6-1.

Environmental benefits

- 6.4 This section considers three elements of environmental benefit with some examples and Table 6-1 sets out examples from each project:
- Landscaping and environmental improvements
 - Protection of wildlife diversity
 - Energy efficiency.

Landscaping and environmental improvements

- 6.5 Many of the projects involve environmental improvements as part of the development of land or property. Most of these have been completed since the start of the evaluation. The clearance and future development of the car park in Dornie has been reported by local residents as having “greatly improved the environment”. In Morvern, landscaping improvements have been carried out and have encouraged an increase in the number of walkers, although numbers are not recorded. On Islay improvements have been made to boundaries and anecdotally the path is now better used and the new football pitch is a huge improvement. Because of the location of the Killin Care Trust’s building the improvements have also had an impact on the quality of the main street.
- 6.6 There are major improvements in the woodlands, with substantial work undertaken across all the projects covered in the evaluation. Combined, these represent a significant amount of land improvement work, much of which has been done by volunteers. The value of these improvements alone would probably represent a sizable proportion of the funding received.

Protection of wildlife diversity

- 6.7 There are also many examples of projects contributing to bio-diversity. Whitefield Loch has been restocked, the Gordon Community Woodland has constructed bird and bat boxes and there have been increased sightings by residents and there are also more reported sightings of badgers, foxes and red squirrels. In North Harris, a deer cull is planned to stop overgrazing and the Trust are working with SNH to make the whaling station safe. Laide and Aultbea has prepared a baseline survey of trees and otters that will help monitor any change. On Islay, the

Trust is working with SNH to monitor corncrakes after improvements to their habitat. Dunnet Forest Trust has carried out a baseline survey of stock and has undertaken a major replanting. Comrie has also carried out a biodiversity analysis and has thinned out some of the woodland to allow more light and encourage growth. They have set up a meeting for a biodiversity group and have brought in a botanist to assist with improving the biodiversity further. Across the projects, particularly the woodland cases, there are good examples of wildlife diversity work and baselines for trees and wildlife.

Energy efficiency

- 6.8 As discussed above, the fact that the assets are now owned by the community has driven a much greater interest in energy efficiency and production of renewables. The housing refurbishments being carried out on Gigha exceed energy efficiency recommendations as do the new Fyne Homes on the island. Projects at Birse, on North Ronaldsay, North Harris and Killin, have all implemented or proposed high building standards.
- 6.9 Renewable energy, particularly the use of wind turbines, has caught the imagination of rural communities generally and where the land is community owned and the proceeds can be reinvested locally there is a big incentive. Gigha now operates three wind turbines very successfully and held a conference last year on renewable energy. North Harris has applied for planning permission for three turbines and also played host to a HIE Renewables event entitled 'Leading from the Edge'. Strathfillan is investigating the prospect of a single turbine to power a building. For many projects the opportunities to generate cheap and sustainable power have become potential spin out projects as part of later phases of development. Dunnet has been part of a research project into the use of bio-fuels and hope to become involved in the Woodchip Wick initiative.

Table 6-1: Environmental benefits reported

Project	Environmental benefits
Arrochar Pit Stop Diner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to interior of diner to provide more flexible space for community Ongoing maintenance of improved outdoor space associated with café
Auldearn Community Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting of shelterbelt, primarily native broadleaved trees
Birse Community Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refurbishment and maintenance of old school and church hall carried out Landscaping carried out Conservation of heritage
Colonsay Community Development Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently considering options for small scale renewable energy schemes
Comrie Millennium Footpath Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodiversity group has been set up and a botanist is currently looking at what is compatible with the area 1.5 acre meadow has been cleared of rubbish and opened to the public so that it has become a community-friendly area Path incorporates a number of points of local historic interest The site being looked after is an area of National Scenic Interest
Crossgates Community Woodland Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans for community tree planting Make and sell bird boxes

Project	Environmental benefits
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangements with school to use land for environmental trips and lessons • Protection of wildlife as a result of wild meadow rather than new housing
Dalmally Community Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although there are no benefits to date, there is potential for the project to generate environmental benefits since it will involve the landscaping of scrub land
Dornie Community Projects Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearance of scrub vegetation in order to start developing new community garden • Car parking improved
Dunnet Forestry Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a 25 year management plan • The condition of the forest has been improved through the ongoing process of clearance and replanting with native and broadleaved species • A wider variety of habitats have been created, for example the forest clearing and anecdotal evidences suggests that this is helping to attract wildlife back. E.g. more chaffinches and wrens have been spotted in the area. • Archaeological survey undertaken prior to any felling or restocking works commencing. The exact site of a hut circle was identified during the survey. • Anecdotal evidence suggests that a wider variety of wildlife are being attracted back to the area
Gigha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major refurbishment of homes to high environmental standards, saving resources • Construction of 3 wind turbines generating renewable electricity sold into the grid • Secured funding for improvements to Achamore gardens • Ownership has changed attitudes to protecting environment and more sense of ownership • Construction uses local materials from island quarry rather than importing
Gordon Community Woodland Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appearance of the area has improved • Species which had been recorded on the site before have now been spotted, including a rare fern and lizards • Surveys carried out by volunteers and results submitted to the Scottish Borders Biological Recording Centre. New sightings are reported as they occur
The Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor repairs and ongoing maintenance carried out to the property to ensure that the house is of an appropriate standard
Iomairt Chille-Chomain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental improvements, including a more complete boundary in better condition. • Improved habitats for corncrake, and more general amenity improvements provided by tree planting on the site etc.
Killin Care Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some improvements to fabric of building which has a traditional appearance and is situated within a Conservation area • Improvements to garden area for residents
Laide and Aultbea community woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early access improvements and some interpretation (although partly undermined by storm damage) • Woodland restructuring achieved allowing replanting for the future

Project	Environmental benefits
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most environmental benefits will only be realised in long term • Strong environmental baseline for future reference / monitoring including planting information and biodiversity records.
Morvern Community Development Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscaping and environmental improvements • More members of the community are taking responsibility for general upkeep and appearance of the area
North Harris Community Steering Group/North Harris Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Path works completed and access improved • Working with SNH to develop an estate plan • Four woodland schemes, with total planting area of 45 ha. Approximately, will commence in early 2007 and a further major scheme is planned for 2008. The small areas of existing natural woodland are being documented with a view to allowing regeneration to occur • A conservation plan is being drawn up for Historic Scotland regarding the whaling station. • An aerial deer count was carried out in April 2006 for the NHT area. This recorded 900 deer in total, which was a reduction on the 2001 count
North Ronaldsay Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration of historic buildings • The Trust's remit includes looking after the sheep and the dyke
Oban War and Peace Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration of a derelict, historic building
Shetland Bus Friendship Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New displays are planned that will heighten the awareness of the need to protect the environment e.g. the cold water corals west of Shetland
Strathfillan Community Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New habitats have been created and there have been sightings of rare butterflies and black grouse • Planting has been carefully designed to be sustainable • Deer damage is monitored and a deer management plan has been drawn up • Bat and bird boxes have been installed • Litter pick-ups have been organised by the woodland officer • Ancient Caledonian forest is being restored.
Whitefield Loch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access to inland water body – including paths and angling platforms that can be accessed by people of all abilities • management of water resource and woodland

Source: SQW SLF evaluation

Evidence from CLU evaluation survey

- 6.10 More than half of the 52 projects in the survey reported landscaping and environmental improvements and a high proportion were engaged in protection of heritage (Table 6-2). Just under a third had some impact on energy efficiency and 36% have an impact on protection of wildlife diversity.
- 6.11 The results support the evidence from the project interviews where there was a great deal of activity related to the environment.

Table 6-2: percentage of the 52 SLF projects covered in the CLU survey reporting major and minor impacts

Category	Major impact	Minor impact
Energy efficiency	19%	12%
Landscaping and environmental improvements	42%	12%
Protection of heritage	37%	19%
Protection of wildlife diversity	21%	15%

Source: SLF supported cases in CLU evaluation survey, SQW

Conclusions on environmental benefits

6.12 One of the objectives of the SLF was to improve the quality of the environment. Most of the projects were able to report some form of impact, although this was across a very wide range of themes:

- protection of wildlife and biodiversity – including tree planting and improved forest management
- promotion of environmental issues through links with schools
- landscaping and physical improvements – many of which were carried out by volunteers
- energy efficiency measures and renewable energy projects – which many projects are considering as a second phase of development.
- quality of design
- protection of heritage.

6.13 Projects led by communities seem to have a real enthusiasm for ensuring that environmental considerations are a priority. Ownership naturally seems to encourage a greater sense of stewardship. There were many examples of residents providing volunteer time to environmental projects and also in repairing and tidying their own properties as a result of higher standards.

- community ownership strengthens a sense of environmental responsibility in all its forms, better design, energy efficiency, protection of heritage and physical improvements
- energy efficiency and renewable power generation become more important when an asset is owned because it represents an investment that will deliver financial returns in the long run
- because the community have to live with the land and buildings there is a direct interest in ensuring quality
- there has been a huge investment of volunteer time in improving the environment in and around the supported projects which enhances the quality of life for residents.

This represents a valuable investment of time – a leveraging of community resource that could not have been achieved otherwise.

7: Development and delivery issues

7.1 The evaluation identified a number of process or development issues, which have been raised in both the two progress reports and are summarised here. We have set these out under a number of headings with evidence and observations.

- Developing ideas
- Community participation
- Additionality
- Barriers
- Monitoring
- Income and new investment
- Delivery of support.

Developing ideas

7.2 One concern surrounding the SLF supported projects has been whether these projects are genuinely driven by the communities or by other agencies, either for political reasons or to off-load land and assets that are expensive or difficult to maintain. Our interviews with projects do not suggest that this has been the case and this is further supported by the evidence from the survey done as part of the CLU evaluation. This indicated that 93% of the initial project ideas came from either local individuals or the community as a whole.

7.3 Most drivers for these projects come from a small group of individuals who recognise an opportunity and raise it with the rest of the community. Often the response has had to be fairly rapid given that purchases are usually governed by when the asset comes on the market. This requires leadership within the community, often from within an existing group, and in the larger cases requires considerable consultation to inform other residents. At this stage, CLU staff will often be involved as well as other agencies, to explain the potential benefits and issues involved in the pursuit of community ownership. The projects that we interviewed believed that the advice and support they had was fair and none considered that they had been misled or had taken the wrong decision, although they were often unprepared for the amount of commitment required and the time that it takes to move projects forward.

7.4 This balanced advice has been critical in the delivery of the SLF and will remain so for the new GCA Fund. If projects feel in anyway misled or fail to understand the commitment needed, it will be detrimental to both the project and to the credibility of the funder. The demand must be led by the community and those delivering the Fund must continue to deliver balanced advice and support.

Community participation

- 7.5 One of the striking features of all the activity has been the high level of participation by local communities. There is of course some relationship between the size of the project and the level of community involvement, but even very small grants have encouraged considerable community interest.

Involvement in the early decisions

- 7.6 Community involvement in making the key initial decisions has, for virtually all the projects, been very high. It is not uncommon for nearly all the households to be represented at the first few meetings. On Islay 115 people attended the first meeting for the Port Charlotte project, in Comrie between 50 and 100 people attend two meetings a year, in Birse over 100 people attend the AGM from a community of 260 households and on Gigha all the households are usually represented at meetings. All of the projects have community groups with a high level of membership and this has usually given them a good base from which to build. The two projects which did not result in purchases, Fort Augustus and Loch Katrine, also had a great deal of support for their proposals.
- 7.7 On Gigha, despite some initial scepticism over the buy out, the community's response has been exceptionally positive. A sum of £200,000 was raised by a community of just 100 people through an enthusiastic local fund raising effort. The regular meetings are attended by representatives from nearly every family and, most importantly, feedback from the community indicates that they genuinely feel as though they are able to influence the direction of development. There continues to be no shortage of volunteers to take positions on the numerous committees that have been set up.
- 7.8 At Port Charlotte, there is also evidence that engagement is being sustained. Birse Community Trust has continued to generate interest, with over 100 attending AGMs, helped by the inclusion of cultural events such as poetry and traditional songs as part of the meetings. Ballantrae has 32 volunteers working at the drop-in centre and the Killin Care Trust has 52. It is probably easier to maintain involvement in the larger mixed activity groups than in some of the others.
- 7.9 Laide and Aultbea Woodland reported that it has been hard to get the community actively involved in *managing* the project (as opposed to attending community events and 'hands on' open days). The actual planning and management is left largely to a core group. In Auldearn issues about the use of land and negotiations have delayed progress and interest. Woodland project community events are well attended. The Gordon Community Woodland is a good example of this. Aside from the initial thorough consultation process, it has held planting days, educational trips with the school and other groups, a "walk through the woods" event attracted 40 people.
- AGMs/formal public meetings: most of the groups have regular open meetings, although somewhat less frequently following acquisition. These are generally well attended, although in certain cases such interest may have subsided to some extent

- issue based consultation: many of the projects were run by a smaller core group, who took issues to the wider community as they arose. For example, in Islay meetings were held to discuss the options and design proposals for the island centre, and this was well attended and facilitated. In North Harris, a community consultation was carried out about the proposed windfarm.
- newsletters and general correspondence are used by a number of community organisations, including Comrie and North Harris Trust
- informal word of mouth: given that many of the communities are quite small, there is a degree of reliance on general knowledge and word of mouth. For example, in Kinlochbervie, whilst the community are not actively involved in maintaining the property they all remain generally aware of the project
- events: nearly all groups have organised events and celebrations in order to stimulate use of the land by the wider community. In Laide and Aultbea a photographic competition was held, and schools visits have been organised. In Dunnet and Strathfillan, woodland activity days proved an inspiring way of generating interest amongst people of all ages
- local surgeries where the development officer has a regular open session with the community take place in Morvern.

7.10 Leadership has been a key influence on the success and inclusiveness of the projects. Different styles have emerged in different communities, largely as a result of specific personalities and local contexts. In Port Charlotte and Auldearn, for example, local Councillors have taken a lead role in progressing the projects. In other places volunteers appear to be willing to take on board a high level of responsibility for developing projects, which could potentially have failed without this commitment. However, there remain questions over how sustainable this is in the longer term. The Birse Community Trust for example, did not use volunteers but instead provides short term paid contracts to local people to deliver specific projects and this is probably a more sustainable approach longer term.

7.11 Most of the projects appear to be led by a small group of ‘champions’ who steer the progress of the project and also often play a very hands on role in the process. The skills of these leading individuals have often been drawn on to achieve project development (e.g. forestry skills of a Director in Laide and Aultbea, business and management skills of Directors in Killin). Although in an ideal world all members of the community would be actively involved in projects, in reality the need to rely on volunteer time can limit participation to some extent. These projects appear to have benefited from the combined skills base and experience of individuals who are often retired.

7.12 The Killin example shows that a Board of Directors working on a voluntary basis can achieve as much as several full time employees might be able to, although this has been hard work and there have been difficulties in recruitment for the care home. In other places community representatives have felt that their time needs to be supplemented with a full or part time employed development officer.

- 7.13 Some community leaders have struggled with the level of commitment required and have been acutely aware of the responsibilities that go with their role in representing the wider community. It is often a much more substantial role than is anticipated at the outset. Clearly the projects have been stressful for some community leaders, but this is largely attributable to relationships within the community, as opposed to the nature of the acquisition per se.
- 7.14 There is no doubt that where a full time project manager can be justified it makes a major impact on the success of the initiative and is a feature shared by the projects that have made the most progress. It is critical in the early years for most projects if they are to make progress and the new GCA Fund will hopefully allow more support to communities to help realise the potential of their ownership.

High levels of consensus

- 7.15 What is also perhaps surprising is the lack of serious disagreement over the direction of the projects. The degree of consensus within the Trusts and communities is testament partly to the skills of the management of the Trust but also the capacity of the community to work together. These are important issues in making the projects work.

Sustaining community participation

- 7.16 In the first year report we commented on the high level of participation by local communities and raised the possibility that this might reduce over time. There is of course some relationship between the size of the project and the level of community involvement, but we found that even very small grants had encouraged considerable community interest.
- 7.17 In the second year, there was evidence from some projects that the direct engagement of the communities in these projects had fallen slightly, although membership in several cases had risen. Development officers reported that communities had become more discerning, engaging with only the elements that affect or interest them. As time passes, the Trust's approach towards engagement will change as the relationships between the assets, the board and the community mature. Rather than the high level of interest found during the process of acquisition, we would anticipate a more sophisticated relationship with more discerning engagement on specific issues.
- 7.18 The level of engagement varies as a function of the level of activity, where there is a lot going on communities are keen to get involved, influence decisions and volunteer. When there are delays or longer periods of planning, enthusiasm naturally falls.
- 7.19 The sustained participation of communities in the projects over time has been encouraging, although we have highlighted the changing nature of the relationship. Maintaining a programme of interesting activities and events is hard work and more likely to happen where there is a development officer rather than solely volunteers. It is important that the ambitions of the project are not lost after acquisition and that there is support to help communities maintain momentum.

Additionality

- 7.20 In Lottery funding “additionality” has a specific meaning as: the extent to which the funds are additional to statutory funding. Here additionality is considered to be about whether the projects and their outputs and outcomes would have been achieved anyway. There are several elements to this, but in essence we are concerned with how the availability of the SLF has changed activity. The main questions are:
- would the project have gone ahead in the same form without the fund
 - would it have gone ahead, but perhaps much later
 - would it have gone ahead but on a smaller scale?
- 7.21 Clearly the scale of the funding means that few projects would have been able to go ahead without the support. In all but three cases we consider that the projects would simply not have gone ahead without the funding. In one of these we understand that the community would have been able to make the acquisition anyway (although the SLF support allowed further funding to be made available for development). In one case, a private purchase may have led to the development of similar facilities, but not the same level of access. In another case the Trust would have been able to continue to lease office space, but would not have had the same security of tenure.
- 7.22 Clearly the “counterfactual” position is complicated. Additionality is not simply about a project going ahead, but about the *way* in which it goes ahead and whether the structure adopted (in this case ownership) generates benefits which could not have been achieved otherwise.
- 7.23 Within our sample for example, the Killin Care Trust believed that the building they purchased would have been developed as backpackers’ accommodation (which may have had more economic benefits than the social centre that it has been developed as). In Auldern there was a concern that the land would be used for another development
- 7.24 Among woodland projects the motivation is often that the condition of the woodland is declining and that access is becoming more difficult. While most cases are fairly clear cut it remains important to consider additionality carefully. We cannot know what would happen if an acquisition did not go ahead, but it cannot be assumed that without it, nothing would have happened.
- 7.25 There is a careful balance to be struck between negative or protective rationales for community ownership like those above and positive reasons that are more about opportunities for better use of land and property. It is not hard to imagine that some communities might seek to buy land to prevent new housing development, while at the same time part of the aim of community development in remote areas is to increase population, an objective which some existing residents might not like. The example of Crossgates (see Table 4.1 for description) could on the face of it appear to be an attempt to prevent new housing, but once understood it is apparent that the specific area of woodland and meadow has been an important part of the community for many years. The purchase has been made to allow it to be improved and integrated as a community amenity. Ownership will allow it to become a

more central part of community life, while housing will continue to be developed elsewhere around the village.

- 7.26 The very existence of the SLF may change the market if sellers know that community groups have access to the SLF funds. This makes the negotiations critical. There could be a disincentive for communities to negotiate as aggressively if they have the backing of the SLF, or for sellers to accept lower prices. We might speculate that this could become more of an issue over time, particularly where landowners access high quality advice. This can occur in relation to former owners retaining specific rights on the land such as mineral or shooting rights, or rights over the income generated by windfarms. These are issues that the new GCA fund will have to continue to guard against.
- 7.27 Despite these issues, we conclude that it is unlikely that the vast majority of the activity that has been supported and the benefits that have been reported could have gone ahead without the SLF and that the level of additionality overall is very high.

Barriers to development

- 7.28 Throughout the evaluation project managers identified specific aspects of the process or issues that were barriers to successful development. The main examples are described in Table 4.1 as part of the project descriptions, but some of the most common and important issues include the following:
- there are several examples of feasibility studies that are considered to have been misleading or taken too long to produce. There may be a role for the agencies delivering the fund to provide more guidance on managing these processes. There can be an “optimism bias” in these studies where there is pressure from the community.
 - in some cases there has been difficulty securing the necessary funding to take forward the project. It is essential that everything possible is done to ensure that any necessary funds for planned development are agreed.
 - nearly all the projects reported that the process had been more time consuming than they imagined. The slower progress than anticipated that some reported was a result of relying on volunteers’ time. With hindsight, this should be expected and groups taking on these types of projects must balance ambition with realism about what can be achieved.
 - slower progress was often because of the high expectations of volunteers. Groups must be aware of the limitations and have realistic expectations of what can be achieved when relying entirely on volunteers
 - legal delays have caused problems for a number of projects including Paic Trust and Comrie Millennium Footpath Association
 - there have been other unforeseen issues such as access problems, funding delays, changes in agency policy and damage to assets. These will always occur, but recognising these and disseminating examples can help limit frustration.

Other issues

- 7.29 Groups need to be flexible and resourceful. This has become more apparent through the course of the evaluation as they have faced challenges. Laide and Aultbea Community Woodland have had to contend with the devastating effects of storms in January 2005. Dalmally has had major delays in securing funding, Strathfillan faced the withdrawal of Leader + funding, Comrie had a period without a development officer (as did Gigha), Pairc has been frustrated by legal delays and the Pitstop Diner struggled in its first year. All projects will face difficult periods and it is a measure of their robustness as to how they respond.
- 7.30 These difficulties can be reduced through sharing learning and experience via networks and good guidance from the advisers. As the number of projects grows and develops, the processes will become better understood and expectations will become more realistic. In this respect these projects are pilots and the lessons they demonstrate are key to the development of longer term support mechanisms.
- 7.31 Crossgates, as the first buyout to use the land reform legislation, faced a lot of practical issues for the first time and this is valuable learning. Examples were the need for very rapid responses from the community (even over Christmas), issues about who organises and manages the ballots and the questions that are used. Given the importance of securing community support the time allowed for this to happen was fairly short.

Monitoring

- 7.32 Monitoring progress is important not only in terms of justifying public funding, but also in demonstrating to the community that their time and effort is worthwhile. This need not be overly complex, but simply moving it up the agenda could make a huge difference to perceptions of how the projects work. Our perception throughout the evaluation has been that monitoring was not very high up the agenda of project development officers. Relatively simple measures like the number of residents, the number of visitors, new businesses, and use of facilities were generally not known. It would not make sense to encourage communities to adopt complex monitoring models, but there could be better guidance to help development officers and project managers think about how they can tell if their activities are making a difference. There is a lot more that could be done to help projects and development officers identify what they expect to see happening, how they monitor it and how they assess the difference that their work is making. Guidance and examples of good practice should be made available for project managers in sessions co-ordinated by the team delivering the new GCA Fund.

Income generation and new investments

- 7.33 The issue raised most often relates to the prospects for sustainability and generating income. Most projects depend on public sector or charitable funding and are developing routes towards generating revenue. As projects seek to become self funding, developing some form of social enterprise is often essential. There are a great many support organisations in Scotland, some of which are now involved in the delivery of the GCA Fund. The Enterprise

Network, both HIE and SE, can provide support, but while community projects are likely to face the same barriers as other social economy businesses, we would expect that they are even more averse to borrowing against community owned assets: they are after all making decisions for assets that belong to future generations as well as the current community.

- 7.34 The engagement of community enterprise support within the team delivering the new GCA fund is to be welcomed and will greatly help community projects to take forward their ideas. It is something which was raised as an issue early in this evaluation, where development officers knew that they needed to look at options for generating income but were unclear where to start.
- 7.35 The woodland projects are engaged in income generating activities which include the sale of timber and other wood-related products and providing recreational, tourism and even educational facilities. The larger estate acquisitions are taking forward plans to install wind turbines. Several building related projects are developing tourism accommodation and retail activities as is the case in North Ronaldsay.
- 7.36 Although the income generated to date represents only a small fraction of the income secured from the public and charitable sectors, it represents progress and marks an aspiration. This is an area that is increasingly seen as crucial for the sustainability of community development. The Growing Community Assets fund will provide a valuable resource in releasing the income potential of these community assets.
- 7.37 In the first year report we commented on the value of the SLF not just in the direct transfer of asset ownership, but also as a trigger for building up a range of community-led services. Our examples were the Birse Community Trust, Gigha and North Ronaldsay, where these community bodies had used the SLF and other funds to develop a suite of activities that complemented each other. Over the period of the evaluation the pattern this has become more evident. Iomairt Chille-Chomain on Islay has used an initial land acquisition to develop a range of community-led projects including plans for a new Island Centre. New proposals for low cost housing have followed and there is a cluster of activity that is benefiting the community. Although our interview with Morvern was about the purchase of a small piece of land around the war memorial, the Community Development Company (MCDC) is engaged in a wider set of projects that include improving the local pier facilities. The profile of MCDC has risen significantly in the last couple of years and although the SLF support is only part of the package, it is an example of how a Community Company can identify and deliver a range of activities. In Table 7-1, responses to the CLU evaluation questionnaire which shows the range of plans across a larger number of the SLF projects. In many ways this reflects the spirit of the funding and the opportunities that communities are developing.

Table 7-1 Examples of spin off projects planned by 33 of the 52 cases responding. These are verbatim examples of future plans.

We are looking at a possible heritage centre but would require help of co-ordinator. We will develop printing activities - new group set up and goods for sale.

Slipway construction now in progress, development of play park in progress (costing stage), plans to improve facilities at hall (W.C.) using renewable energy envisaged, establishment of more group usage of hall

We hope to purchase additional estate and employ a third person soon to bring projects to fruition.

Implementing environmental improvement plan, installation of amenity seating and artwork

Not definite yet but using timber to build a cabin / bunkhouse in the wood for use as an educational facility for schools. The first priority is to extract fallen timber and clear up and replant. They need funding for this as timber prices are so low.

Construction of turning circle on the land, production of interpretation leaflet and panel, guided walks, school packs/ visits, production of booklet about graveyard and history

Buildings for youth project. Memorial garden.

Drainage and land reclamation and landscaping

Plan for centre - use for youth clubs and elderly gym.

If it happens - maybe walks with history information boards. Maybe a community wind farm project bringing in £400,000 a year.

Community BBQ site, Children's play area

To get permission for access. Major felling operation - see the timber to pay for felling. Maybe a visitor attraction. Maybe even housing development.

Timber processing unit, interpretation centre, training, interpretation outside + arts projects, local product development.

We have completed the footpath. Now we are looking at funding possibilities to develop the croft house into a museum/ local archive visitor centre with coffee shop

Renovation of a cottage to include a cafe, kitchen, office, toilets. Renovation of 2 cottages into self-catering accommodation.

Considering registration of land for the community, securing title of Castle and environs for the community and a project to restore and maintain the castle heritage for future generations

Bus no longer comes to village - possibility of further purchase. Travelling theatre group, social event, pipe band performances.

Purchase of the land to develop forestry processing business. Marina project which will mean purchase of land. Golf course. New school - a council project but they need a lot of prodding.

Redevelopment of the site to house a new development including tearoom, gift shop, interpretation centre and bunk house

Renovation of mill and cottage

Ongoing management of the woods and development of recreation

Laundry and drying room on PO site using overcapacity from woodchip boiler. Purchase of the jetty (possible future income from mooring fees, visiting boats).

With the water business there is an idea of having polytunnels in which to grow fruit for flavouring the water.

After refurbishment of ground floor is complete, the upper floor will be converted into units for use as craft centre. Local history group, youth group etc

Increasing self catering units on island. Supporting expansion of fish farm. Purchase of areas not currently in ownership, development of crofting units, development of more business, development of community projects e.g. play park, fishing loch.

Source: CLU evaluation, 2005, SQW

Working partners and leveraging support

7.38 The projects supported by the SLF have been well integrated into other forms of support. Each one is different, but there is a long list of partners which demonstrates the extent to which these projects are involved with raising other sources of funding and advice (Table 7-2). There has been considerable support for community ownership projects from all these agencies and charities. This may in part because many of these projects were relatively novel. Whether the availability of funding and support remains at such a high level remains to be seen.

Table 7-2 Organisations that SLF projects are working with or being financially supported by

• Better Neighbourhood Services Fund (BNSF)	• Forest for Scotland Trust	• National Trust for Scotland
• Carnegie Trust	• Forestry and Rural Development Scheme (FRDS)	• North Highland Forest Trust
• Charity Banks	• Forward Scotland	• PESCA
• Community Councils	• 'Gaelic in the community'	• Robertson Trust
• Community Environmental Renewal Scheme (CERS)	• Government Scheme for Rural Petrol Stations	• Rural Challenge Fund
• Community Economic Development Grant	• Gower Trust	• Rural Environment Action Project (REAP)
• Communities Scotland	• Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)	• Scottish Agricultural College (SAC)
• Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)	• Highlands and Islands Social Enterprise Zone (HISEZ)	• Scottish Executive
• Crofting Community Development Scheme	• Highland Bio Diversity	• Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)
• Crown Estate	• Historic Scotland	• Scottish Water
• Davidson Trust	• Initiative at the Edge	• Social Investment Scotland
• Disability Shetland	• John Muir Trust	• Small Highland Communities Housing Trust
• Entrust (Environmental Body)	• Lloyds TSB	• SportScotland
• Forestry Commission Scotland	• Local Authorities	• Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
• Forest Enterprise	• Local Enterprise Companies (LECs).	• WR Alliance

Halting decline

7.39 While much attention is paid to looking for “new” outcomes, we must also be aware that projects can prevent bad ones. The rationale for many is to reverse economic or environmental decline. The obvious examples are on Gigha where years of lack of investment had resulted in poor housing and infrastructure. A similar pattern was evident on North Harris. In the woodland cases and some of the property projects, lack of maintenance and investment has resulted in, or would result in, the declining quality of the assets. In these cases the additionality is as much about avoiding further negative effects rather than necessarily generating new activities.

Quality of support and delivery

7.40 One of the strongest messages from the evaluation has been the quality of support and delivery of the fund by the Community Land Unit’s SLF advisers. This was reflected in the positive results of HIE’s evaluation in 2005. The quality of support provided, at all stages, was highly praised by the projects and partners. It is doubtful whether the same quality and results could have been achieved without the SLF advisers. Importantly this support has been as important post-acquisition as it was in the lead up period. The SLF officers were seen as being approachable and positive. Whilst the groups are becoming stronger and more self sustaining, SLF provided support which unlocks income, both from other funders and by allowing investment to be made to achieve income generation. The development of the GCA fund should further aid this.

- 7.41 Given the low level of knowledge and expertise within communities at the outset of some of these projects it is perhaps not surprising that any help, particularly financial, is warmly received, but we need to be careful how we interpret this. Even amongst community leaders, who are often more versed in dealing with public institutions, the feedback has generally been very positive. As community capacity and experience grows, the level of support expected might also grow and this could cause more friction. At the moment the availability of funding is seen as a welcome surprise, but in future it may become an expectation. The Land Fund has raised the bar in terms of the funding and help expected.

Developing a network

- 7.42 The SLF investment has created a growing number of people involved in, and with increased experience in working with communities. Several years ago there were a much smaller number of participants. Now, with the SLF supporting 188 projects, many with development officers and with management groups, this represents a substantial skills base, aside from the experience being built up in the stakeholder agencies such as CLU, Communities Scotland, the Forestry Commission, SNH, Scottish Enterprise and BIG. This offers new opportunities in a number of ways to join up activity, experience and support. It makes it worthwhile to hold more (and more specialist) events to share learning and good practice, develop tools and templates, encourage joint working between projects and develop a set of exemplary case studies.
- 7.43 These types of events and support were highly rated and frequently requested by development officers. Within the new GCA fund and its delivery team there will be opportunities for more specialist advice and guidance. Linked to this is the need for training and sharing experiences. This was always reported positively by the projects where it has taken place and for projects that feel isolated, it can be critical.
- 7.44 There may also be refined models of delivering support. For example, smaller projects that are led by volunteers can struggle to take ideas forward where time and experience are limited. GCA and similar funding arrangements might consider how best to ensure that the experience gained by development officers might be shared across a range of smaller projects, rather than at best being offered to a single applicant organisation.

Funding for publicly owned land and assets

- 7.45 This raises the issue of the differences between land acquired from the public and private sectors, particularly where the public sector has an existing obligation to maintain the land and provide specific forms of access. The use of lottery funding to purchase assets that are already owned by the public would be difficult for some observers to understand and this has been raised several times in the course of this work. There is perhaps a danger of the SLF money and specific communities being targeted by public sector agencies in order to relieve them of legislative obligations and financial burdens. The solution is in ensuring that:
- the demand for projects is genuinely community led
 - communities have access to all the information about potential costs and liabilities

- they receive fair and balanced advice.
- 7.46 There was some reassurance about this from the CLU survey of projects which asked where the idea for projects had come from. This suggested that, among the SLF funded projects 93% of the ideas were reported to come from either local individuals or the local community collectively. The idea for the remaining 7% of cases came from the local authority, the CLU or LEC adviser or another public body. In these cases the projects have been community led, but it remains a valid concern and one that should be guarded against.
- 7.47 There may also be issues where the land that has been purchased might be a liability rather than an asset. For example, at Laide and Aultbea the woodland had been poorly structured when it was planted and there was a dominance of trees that generate only poor quality timber. This only became apparent when the woodland sustained considerable storm damage, highlighting its structural problems. Similarly, in Arrochar, the community acquired a café on the basis of turnover figures quoted to them by the vendor, which they have found difficult to achieve after taking it on.
- 7.48 The role of information and balanced advice is critical here as well. Where there are example cases like this it is important that they are brought to the attention of communities so that they know the pitfalls. These types of examples help communities and potential directors of Trusts to know what to look for in developing their own project.
- 7.49 The cases covered in this evaluation do not shed much light on whether or not asset ownership is necessary to achieve the reported benefits, or whether leasing arrangements can be as effective. Dunnet and Comrie were the only cases that did not own the asset, which does not provide enough of a comparator.
- 7.50 Asset ownership is not automatically an appropriate solution in all cases and all the options should be explored. There will be communities that are more comfortable with a management agreement rather than the responsibilities that come with ownership. In other cases, the advantages of ownership might be much stronger.
- 7.51 Where assets are managed rather than owned there are limitations on the opportunities for developing projects. New ideas and potential projects often have to be agreed with the owner and the arrangements for levering in funding would be more complex where the owners are required to support applications. Funders such as charities may also be less willing to support projects where there is a split in ownership and management. It is also possible that after a period of substantial work, the land could ultimately be sold anyway by the owner, so there will always be more insecurity.
- 7.52 From this evaluation we would conclude that where communities have taken on ownership, the model has worked well. Many of the outcomes relate to empowerment, engagement and civic pride within communities rather than the direct services or opportunities that have been provided, but equally the two cases operating under management agreements have also delivered benefits and do not appear to have been hindered by this arrangement.
- 7.53 Ultimately decisions on the appropriate model will depend on the nature of the community, its objectives and its capacity. Each case will need to consider the implications and opportunities of the different approaches.

Sustainability

- 7.54 One of the key questions for all these projects is the extent to which they are or will soon become financially sustainable. Financial sustainability means that the Trust does not require further on-going public funding to support its activities. This is difficult to define as Trusts will always seek to undertake new projects and to raise additional funds. In practice, the requirement for more resources relates to taking forward specific plans.
- 7.55 Developing the capability to generate income will be a fundamental element of making the community “sustainable”. Many of the Trusts are investigating energy projects, woodland projects require, for example, equipment and trees, while others require support to develop tourism facilities, provide training or get advice. In this sense most projects will continue to require further investment to help generate income from their new assets.

8: Conclusions

Overview of achievements

- 8.1 The Scottish Land Fund invested £13.9m between 2001 when it was launched and 2006. It has supported 188 community groups. It has contributed to the development of a huge range of projects from major land buyouts to small scale feasibility studies and has helped communities to take up ownership of all kinds of land, woodlands and buildings. This evaluation covered 26 of these projects and through progress reports and this final report has provided evidence of examples of progress.

Summary

- 8.2 Overall a large and diverse range of projects have been supported and these have been led by community demand rather than ideas generated from other agencies. There have been remarkably few failures. With the exception of Whiteloch, none of the 188 community groups supported have had to return the assets.
- 8.3 Community engagement has continued to be high over the three years of the evaluation, but fluctuates depending on levels of activity. It helps to have real physical changes taking place. The relationship between the community and the Trust board matures, with more selective involvement in aspects that interest specific groups and people. In most cases there continues to be interest in holding director posts, but there are examples where getting commitment is proving more difficult. This has been supported by a remarkably high level of consensus within communities. The projects have clearly caught the imagination of the communities and this level of engagement is unlikely to have been achieved without the prospect of ownership.
- 8.4 The speed of development has varied but none has ended with the acquisition. There are numerous examples of future ideas and further planning. Progress of projects has, in the main, been good. There are several exceptional cases and a small number that have struggled, but the vast majority have met or are meeting their objectives.
- 8.5 There are good examples in each type of project, land acquisition, woodlands, buildings and small areas of land. These prove the success of the model and the rationale for the intervention in the first place. They are also valuable sources of good practice. The key factors for successful projects are good leadership, imagination and working with clearly defined communities. This explains why islands in particular have produced many of the best examples. It is also encouraging that, where there have been problems, the communities have shown some resilience.
- 8.6 The high level of community engagement, through events, educational activities and managing Trust activities has led to real social benefits in developing networks, skills and capacity. Although it is impossible to measure, the larger projects can claim significant increases in social capital. Although these galvanising effects have been reported it is only

through visiting and meeting the communities that the real sense of the contribution of the projects make can be fully appreciated.

- 8.7 These social benefits form the basis of both attracting and retaining population and of economic development. We argue in this report that strong social infrastructure will make the chances of economic benefit much more likely. Gigha remains the model for this, where the social factors associated with the community ownership of the island have triggered a rapidly growing population and with this a range of new businesses, employment and economic activity. In North Harris these effects have been more restrained, but may emerge over time. It is more difficult among other, smaller investments to make a direct link to reported social benefits and economic conditions.
- 8.8 One of the success factors of the SLF has been its delivery. The SLF generated a real enthusiasm among all of those involved in it. As a pilot project it has received considerable support and benefited from a great deal of commitment from the Community Land Unit and the Big Lottery team. It has also generated interest and support from many other public agencies charities and individuals across Scotland and more widely. It is doubtful that the same positive impacts could have been achieved without this level of commitment and support.
- 8.9 It is also important that even with this level of enthusiasm, care must be taken to ensure that the process is “demand led” by the community. There is no evidence that this is not the case among the projects covered in this evaluation, but it remains critical for the new GCA fund in ensuring that appropriate projects are developed.
- 8.10 Although the SLF has now closed, the new GCA fund offers a broader range of support. This fits more closely with the view of community asset ownership as a route to community development. There will be more opportunities to help communities realise the value of their assets.
- 8.11 Generating income has been a growing issue among the projects covered in the evaluation and the new Fund should help to ensure that this is supported in a way that the Land Fund could not. The second major issue is the need to encourage shared experiences, learning and training. There is now a growing base of experience and expertise that can usefully help new projects. It is important that this support infrastructure should continue to be available. We would suggest that many of the elements of this support are already available from different sources in Scotland and that the most important role is in signposting and partnership. Access to legal and enterprise support and training for directors were the most cited examples of beneficial support reported.

Progress against objectives

- 8.12 The SLF has achieved the objectives that it set out. These were fairly broad, but the projects have clearly contributed to its aims:
- to improve opportunities and reduce disadvantage both for communities and individuals in rural areas

- to encourage community involvement and participation in land ownership and management
- to enhance the environmental diversity and quality of rural Scotland
- to facilitate positive use of the land reform legislation on the community right to buy
- to diversify the pattern of land ownership in rural Scotland

8.13 A more important question is the scale of this contribution and whether it represents an effective use of the Fund. Throughout the evaluation we have stressed both the intangible nature of much of the benefit and also our view that it is necessary to take a long term view. It is also important to recognise, as we do in the introduction, that the fund represents an investment that will remain a valuable asset in perpetuity, in contrast to other investments which have a much shorter life span. The following sections consider the contribution to each of these objectives to date.

To improving opportunities and reducing disadvantage both for communities and individuals in rural areas

- 8.14 The indicators of this are the number of people who can be considered to have improved opportunities (socially and economically) and whether the projects overall contribute to reducing disadvantage. Across the projects covered in the evaluation, there is little doubt that they have engaged a large number of people. Each of the Trusts delivering these projects has a substantial membership, typically around 80 -100 people. We estimated that typically around 30 people from the community are involved directly in managing and working with each project. It would be reasonable to conclude that across the 188 groups supported by the SLF, a total of more than 5,500 people will have been involved directly and many more benefiting from the amenity provided.
- 8.15 All of the projects in some way aim to reduce disadvantage, for example through the provision of new facilities, in trying to attract new visitors to help generate income and employment, through security of tenure and more generally through offering a stake in the community. The scale of these effects varies considerably between projects. There are small groups of people who have benefited significantly – those who have found employment, use the new facilities or have had their homes refurbished – and a much larger group whose lives have been improved, perhaps more marginally – as users of a new path, car park or football pitch. These benefits will continue and potentially grow as the assets are used and developed further.
- 8.16 For the two larger investments, Gigha and North Harris, the impact has been much greater. These new opportunities are most tangible on Gigha, with new economic activity and virtually no unemployment. In North Harris, the buy out has created potential for local residents as well as protecting existing employment. The scale of the project means that realising this potential will take more time, but there has been recent new investment and there are a number of new projects in the pipeline. The number of people involved in these projects and the types of activities supported lead us to conclude that the SLF has made a significant contribution to increasing opportunity and reducing disadvantage.

To encourage community involvement and participation in land ownership and management

- 8.17 From the outset of all these projects there has been a high level of community involvement. We concluded that this has largely been sustained through the development stages. The views of the development officers are that this level of participation has been generated as a result of the change of asset ownership. By enabling community ownership the SLF has been responsible for this engagement. In our view there is little doubt that the SLF has made a major contribution to this objective, encouraging a high level of participation and experience that can be built upon over time.

To enhance the environmental diversity and quality of rural Scotland

- 8.18 The projects covered have made some contribution to this, most obviously in relation to woodland where there is evidence of better management and greater use. At a more practical level, most projects have involved environmental improvements of some kind, even if this is just better care of areas around buildings. New tree planting is common as is construction and improvements to pathways and signage. A large number of the projects interviewed had arrangements with local schools and held open days to engage the community in environmental and wildlife-related projects.
- 8.19 Of all the elements, the environmental impacts of the projects will take longest to establish. Bio-diversity baselines have been prepared for several and it may be years before these are revisited and any conclusions can be drawn.
- 8.20 If the enhancement of the environment includes efforts to encourage energy efficiency and renewable power generation then the ownership of land has provided communities with new opportunities to contribute to reducing carbon emission targets. Gigha is the main example, but there are other proposals for wind turbines and bio-mass as well as high environmental standards of the buildings that have been built. Local communities seem to have a good understanding of the environmental aspects of their work. The use of local materials and energy efficient designs seem to be more central to community thinking than might otherwise be the case.

To facilitate positive use of the land reform legislation on the community right to buy

- 8.21 The Scottish Land Fund was described as the “petrol in the tank” of the legislation. Without access to funds it would be extremely difficult to envisage communities raising the sums required in most cases. The buy out on Eigg demonstrated the huge efforts that were required with limited financial support. The Land Fund and the support arrangements have made the process and the legislation more manageable. In practice, the legislation itself has been used only in a small number of cases. It may be that its presence and the publicity that it received has done more to encourage communities to come to arrangements with land owners and negotiate rather than taking recourse in the legislation.
- 8.22 The Land Fund has proved hugely valuable in enabling the use of the legislation by communities, as it was intended to do. While there may be some concerns that it could be used for negative purposes, for example to prevent new house building or other new

developments, there has been no evidence of this in the cases covered in this evaluation. In this respect we would argue that the SLF has facilitated positive use of the legislation, although in practice this has been more through supporting negotiated sale than in driving hostile buy outs.

To diversify the pattern of land ownership in rural Scotland

- 8.23 The extent to which this has been achieved is largely a factor of the number and scale of the projects supported rather than related to their quality. Consequently, we would conclude that while the number of projects supported and the investment made is clearly significant at a Scottish level, the value of the grants awarded will not make more than a modest change in the pattern of land ownership. It is perhaps more important as a demonstration of what can be achieved; a first set of examples that may build momentum. By definition the SLF has helped diversify land ownership, but more importantly it has supported a model for community ownership.
- 8.24 It is challenging to sum up such a diversity of projects and experiences. Each is very different, but there are good models in every category of project. It is not the model or even structures that make good projects but the people who lead them and the involvement and imagination of the community.
- 8.25 There has been a shift between the aim of asset ownership as an end in itself towards a broader recognition of the ways in which it can be used to deliver community development. In other words, owning the asset is not the end of the process but the beginning. There is often a gap between when communities take ownership of an asset and the start of a development period. This may be because, for earlier projects, the ownership of the asset was something of a novelty. The focus under the new GCA Fund is about how assets are used rather than ownership for its own sake. The new funding programme places more emphasis on releasing the potential of the assets and the communities.
- 8.26 The purchase of assets through the Land Fund is not on its own going to address the challenges of rural communities. It is a tool to help communities build capacity, empower their decision making and realise potential that could not be achieved through other means. It might be argued that there are other approaches such as management agreements that could be used. Although there is not sufficient evidence within the case studies, we would argue that the ownership, in addition to providing a basis for further leverage for funding future developments, is also important in building commitment and engagement. It gives communities more power and security.

Lessons for GCA development

- 8.27 These projects and the SLF itself are pilots and the lessons they demonstrate are key to the development of longer term support mechanisms. There are five specific areas where there are lessons:

Community-led

- 8.28 The importance of continuing to demonstrate that projects and project ideas are community led. This will be critical GCA and obviously, where there is not the community commitment, in the medium to longer term projects will fail. This means ensuring that all potential projects receive fair and balanced advice and understand the long term commitment required.
- 8.29 This should mean exploring a number of options in addition to asset ownership. A good feasibility study should consider the various costs and benefits of a range of ownership and management structures for the community and these should be discussed with the community.

Challenges and risk

- 8.30 Finally, the case examples are helpful in demonstrating the range of challenges that projects face. Almost all felt that things took much longer than they anticipated and that it needed more commitment. Potential projects must be aware of these challenges: from legal delays, changes in funding policies and difficulties in recruitment to illness and bad weather. As the GCA develops, there will be any other examples to add and a much wider base of experience to use. It will be important not to bury the less successful projects but to understand what works and what does not.

These types of challenges should be discussed with projects and outlined in any feasibility work. This should form the basis of a risk assessment and to do this requires a fair understanding of experiences from elsewhere.

Community engagement

- 8.31 The SLF examples have shown many different ways of engaging communities. They suggest that community engagement tends to be greater when people can see things happening. These “quick win” projects can help build community involvement and enthusiasm after the interest in the original asset purchase starts to diminish.

Encourage “quick win” projects to maintain and build community engagement. Share experience of activities that work. Visits to other community projects, surgeries for residents to discuss issues with the project manager and mixing community Trust business with other social events have all proved successful mechanisms for sustaining involvement.

Development officer support

- 8.32 These all involve substantial time and organisation and can usually only be achieved where a project development officer is in post. Certainly for the first few years this role has been crucial in the projects that have made progress against their objectives. Relying solely on volunteers’ time will often have a cost in terms of slower progress. For smaller projects having a full time development officer may not be justified and we suggest that GCA might consider ways of sharing development officer support across a number of projects. There is a balance to be struck between allowing communities to develop projects if and when they want, but at the same time, it represents an investment of public funding and BIG has a responsibility to ensure that it is used to deliver community benefit. In the first few years it is appropriate to ensure that support is available to encourage and help community projects progress. This should include the following.

Encouraging imaginative ideas and good leadership – the initial asset ownership should be seen as a base from which the community can go on to leverage other ideas and projects. Providing opportunities to interact with other projects and setting up sessions to exchange ideas and stimulate new thinking will help encourage more imaginative approaches. They may not necessarily work, but the more testing that is done, the more quickly solutions and approaches that do can be developed. This experimentation should be encouraged

Good leadership – the experience of the projects covered in the evaluation highlights the importance of good leadership. Training and experience among development officers is crucial and will no doubt leave its mark on the way that the community takes forward its activities for a long time afterwards. As well as the importance of recruitment, as much time as possible and a good range of events and exchanges should be encouraged between development officers, which could also include appropriate voluntary staff

Signposting – there is already a great deal of experience in community-led development in Scotland and GCA does not on its own have to deliver every aspect of support. It will be important to make use of and help join up existing support services. These include the CVOs, Community Enterprise support groups and charities as well as organisations like the Community Woodland Association, the Crofters Commission and the main local and national agencies. The more exchange of ideas and information between all these partners, the stronger the network will be community groups and the more successful they will be.

Sustainability

- 8.33 This evaluation covered only a very short period in what are long term projects. This means that for all of them sustainability is important. There are two aspects to this. Financial sustainability requires community groups to find new sources of income. After the initial worries over raising funds for the initial purchase, projects start to look more closely at how they can generate income. This was often triggered by the insecurity of short term grant funding and the hard work in continually applying for funds from various sources, a full time job in itself. A second factor appeared to be that as the funding for development officers started to run out, projects believed that they continued to need the position.

The evaluation found that many of the projects would be financially sustainable without the development manager, but that without this post progress would be much slower. There are many ideas for generating income and no doubt scope for many more. A major strand of GCA's work should be enabling community projects to explore, exchange and develop income generating ideas. Again this requires a strong network and good signposting to support.

- 8.34 The second element of sustainability relates to maintaining community engagement and succession planning. Very few projects raised this as an issue as it no doubt seemed to early in their own development, but as projects and community led projects mature, there will increasingly be a need to ensure that there are mechanisms to encourage and develop new project leaders beyond those whose idea the original purchase was.

In addition to getting new people involved, projects should ensure that there are periods of overlap between changes in management so that skills and experience are not lost. Several projects make good use of existing skills within the community and it will be important that as these people step down, their experience can still be drawn upon. This type of succession planning should be part of a project's forward look and recognition of their permanence.

Monitoring

- 8.35 It remains a serious challenge to measure the progress and benefits generated by these projects. There was very little data recorded, for example, on changes in local conditions, the number of visitors and even the population. This makes it difficult to attribute benefits to the investment and the work of the Trust, in the future. The projects supported are diverse and it would be complex and time-consuming to impose a performance management framework, but this is an area which should have a much higher priority among community groups.

Monitoring and measuring performance should be promoted to communities as a way of understanding the progress they are making, as tool for reporting to the community and to help attract further funding. It should not be seen solely as ticking boxes. Helping community groups understand this and moving it up their agenda should be a priority for GCA.

Conclusions

- 8.36 On the basis of the projects covered within this evaluation we conclude that the SLF has made a significant contribution to community development through the projects that have been supported. It has helped 188 community groups to own their own land and assets and we estimate that around 5,500 people have worked directly as part of these groups. The SLF has facilitated the provision of a range of community owned and run facilities that have added to the quality of life of residents.
- 8.37 Almost all of the projects reviewed have moved beyond the initial acquisition of the land or asset and have made progress in realising its potential in many different ways. The speed of progress varies as does the scale of the benefits, but there is evidence of social, economic and environmental improvements across all of them. These projects have not just been about transfer of ownership, but demonstrating that the change of ownership leads to outcomes that would not have happened otherwise.
- 8.38 Among the case-study projects we have found strong social benefits through increased social interaction, participation and networks. Although we might expect levels of participation to drop, this has not been the case and the community groups were as active in the final year of the evaluation as they were in the first.
- 8.39 A number of projects have also led to increases in economic activity. Most have some form of income stream and plan to increase it over the coming years. But it is also important to recognise the role that asset ownership has played in strengthening these communities, providing a focus for their activities and responsibility and control. Although there is not an adequate basis for comparison, the high levels of participation were frequently attributed by the development officers to ownership.
- 8.40 Several projects have faced challenges and it is to their credit that they have continued to operate and make progress. How communities react to these set-backs is an important test of the community ownership model and from the small number of examples here, there does seem to be robustness. Another indication of this is that across the 188 groups supported, we are only aware of one that has had to change ownership.
- 8.41 This is not to say that community ownership will work in all cases or should always be the preferred model, but the results from this evaluation indicate that there are strong advantages

and some of the possible disadvantages such as dwindling interest or conflict within the groups may be overstated. The results of the evaluation help understand more clearly how this model has worked and how it can work better. There are sufficient successful examples among all types of project to indicate that the community ownership model can and is working, but that the success of individual projects depends on the qualities of the management and the community.

- 8.42 The Scottish Land Fund has successfully achieved its objectives. The assets that have been invested in are now owned by their communities and will continue to be a base for generating further opportunities and benefits for many years.