

Scottish Land Fund:
Findings from our evaluation



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Stock code BIG-SLFEVAL
ISSN 1744-4756 (Print)
ISSN 1744-4764 (Online)
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Summary

In 2003, we appointed SQW Ltd to evaluate the Scottish Land Fund (SLF). This document reports on the main findings from the evaluation.

Summary

- ▶ The Scottish Land Fund has successfully pioneered the community ownership model on a wide scale across rural Scotland. It has allowed communities to take charge of and develop assets from which they will benefit for many years to come.
- ▶ The programme has also helped to improve communities' quality of life. While the speed of progress and the scale of benefits do vary, there is evidence from almost all projects of social, economic and environmental benefits.
- ▶ The community ownership approach has directly promoted local interaction and networks. It is important to note that community groups have remained just as strong and active after acquiring land or assets. Many remark that the transfer of ownership was 'just the beginning of the process' rather than an end in itself.
- ▶ These are long-term projects. While they have the potential to deliver further and stronger benefits in future, they will also face challenges, particularly if there are changes in the availability of funding. This makes identifying and generating new sources of income critical over the next few years.
- ▶ Community ownership may not be suitable in all circumstances, and it is important to be aware of the importance of facing up to challenges and maintaining local

commitment. But of the 188 communities supported by the Land Fund, only one has had to give up ownership.

The evaluation was undertaken by Bruce Macdonald, Laura Henderson and Fiona Simpson. This is the Big Lottery Fund's interpretation of the evaluators' findings and was compiled by Steve Browning.

The Scottish Land Fund

We established the Scottish Land Fund (SLF) in 2001, to support local communities to acquire, manage and develop rural land. SLF complemented land reform legislation introduced by the Scottish Parliament. The programme aimed to:

- improve opportunities and reduce disadvantage for both individuals and communities in rural Scotland
- encourage community involvement and participation in land ownership and management
- enhance the environmental diversity and quality of rural Scotland
- facilitate positive use of the land reform legislation on the community right to buy
- diversify the pattern of land ownership in rural Scotland.

The then New Opportunities Fund allocated £10 million to the Scottish Land Fund in 2001. As a result of the success of the programme we added £5 million in 2003. Altogether, by the time the programme closed in July 2006, the Land Fund made 256 grants to 188 rural communities to support their ambitions. We defined rural communities as those with a population of 10,000 or less.

The Community Land Unit of Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), in partnership with Scottish Enterprise network (SEn), delivered the programme on our behalf, although the Scottish Land Fund Committee made decisions on all applications.

The Scottish Land Fund was part of our Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities initiative, which operated across all countries of the UK. We are now building on the Land

Fund's achievements in our Growing Community Assets investment area in Scotland.

Further details of the Scottish Land Fund and the range of projects that it funded – as well as information about Growing Community Assets – are available on our website: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/scotland

The evaluation

We wanted to assess:

- how far the initiative has succeeded in meeting its overall aims
- how successful projects have been at meeting their aims
- good practice in running and developing projects and programmes.

SQW Ltd, in association with Land Use Consultants, began the evaluation in January 2004. In the first year, the evaluators identified 20 of the then 86 projects and interviewed people directly involved in the project, as well as other local residents. In that and following years, the interviews considered such questions as:

- the background to and context of the project
- how the project was developed
- how it involved local communities
- the activities supported
- the benefits that projects have generated.

Over two follow-up phases, the evaluators investigated continuing progress and plans for the future.

BIG continued making grants for most of the evaluation period. Some of the initial feasibility studies included in the evaluation did not result in community purchases, so the evaluators introduced new case studies in the second and third phases. Throughout the evaluation, case studies included a range of project types, sizes, and locations. This helped the study to cover the wide range of projects that we supported. In the final stage, though, the evaluators focused more on larger projects for the simple reason that there was

often more to be learned from them as time passed. But this does not mean that smaller projects were not important or effective.

In addition to interviews with case-study projects, the evaluators have considered the wider context, consulting BIG staff and talking to stakeholders in a number of relevant bodies, including the Scottish Executive, Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE), the Community Land Unit (CLU), Scottish Enterprise, the Crofters Commission, Forest Enterprise and Scottish National Heritage.

Finally, this evaluation has also drawn on findings from SQW's 2005 evaluation of the Community Land Unit for HIE. This covered 52 projects that had also received SLF funding.

Further details of the evaluators' approach are available in the three full SLF evaluation reports, available on our website.

The context

The question of land reform, particularly in rural Scotland, became increasingly important with the move towards devolution after 1997. The Scottish Office established a Land Reform Policy Group at that time to consider matters relating to land ownership, tenure and management arrangements. They noted that existing arrangements could affect opportunities available to individual Scots, as well as contributing to environmental degradation and the depopulation of rural communities.

In 1999, the Group recommended the creation of a Scottish Land Fund to complement the Scottish Parliament's plans for wider land reform legislation. The Group and later the Land Fund itself highlighted the potential for rural communities to take charge of local assets and to run them in such a way as to contribute to sustainable development of both the environment and communities themselves.

At the same time, there has been growing interest in 'asset-based community development', or ABCD. This approach builds on a community's existing assets and resources – such as land, buildings or knowledge – to deliver stronger and more sustainable solutions to the challenges and opportunities that communities face. A key principle underpinning this approach is that by taking on ownership of assets, communities assert greater control over their own development.

BIG has responded to the new interest in ABCD and to our experience from the Land Fund by launching Growing Community Assets (GCA) in 2006. This investment area will allow rural and urban communities in Scotland to acquire, manage and develop community assets. More information about GCA is available on our website.

Findings

The range of enquiries and funding

It was not clear at the beginning of the programme just what the level and type of demand there would be. The evaluators reviewed the pattern of demand across the course of the programme. Some of the main findings follow:

- ▶ The programme dealt with 739 initial enquiries and 316 applications.
- ▶ It made 256 grants, worth a total of £13.9 million, to 188 community groups in rural areas.
- ▶ The first year was the busiest for enquiries, but applications arrived steadily throughout the programme.
- ▶ The Land Reform Act did not have a significant effect on the number of applications.
- ▶ The number of initial enquiries was highest in Argyll and the Islands, Caithness and Sutherland, Ross and Cromarty, Eilean Siar and Dumfries and Galloway, while the number of applications was highest in Argyll and the Islands and Eilean Siar.
- ▶ Our investment in Argyll and Bute, Eilean Siar and Highland areas was especially strong. The large majority of our funding – about £12 million – was spent on acquisition. That was followed by development funding (about £1.5 million). We also spent £380,000 on small grants for technical assistance.
- ▶ The average grant size was about £55,000, but the five largest grants together accounted for just over half of the total SLF budget.

These findings highlight the importance not only of HIE and CLU involvement in supporting and developing projects and applications, but also of the relatively high contribution to a small number of large land purchases. Some of these, such as the Isle of Gigha, have received a large amount of public and media interest. But the Land Fund has supported a wide range of smaller but equally successful community projects across rural Scotland.

Project activities and progress

Altogether, SLF supported 188 local communities. Some of these received technical assistance grants to develop their ideas, and then went on to use larger grants to buy or develop land. Details of all grants made are available on our website.

The annual evaluation reports cover projects involved each year and give details of progress, but in this section we focus most directly on findings from the final year of the evaluation. There is a very good reason for doing so. An overwhelming message from the evaluation is that the projects are long-term commitments, and that buying the asset is only the first stage of this commitment.

Given the range of size and types of projects, it is not surprising that the rate of progress has varied. In some communities, involving and inspiring local people to take charge of and achieve early goals has encouraged them to identify and begin work on new projects. In some cases projects have started to generate new income sources that help both to sustain the projects themselves and to provide further opportunities for the community.

Case study

North Ronaldsay Trust

North Ronaldsay is the northernmost of the Orkney Islands.

The Trust was established in 2000 to acquire the historic lighthouse buildings and received £48,000 from the Land Fund in 2002 to help the community to do so. Since then, the Trust has renovated the buildings and repaired the dyke that keeps the famous seaweed-eating sheep on the shore. It has established a trading woollen mill that employs several people and whose shop currently brings in about £12,000 a year. The Trust also earns money from tours of the lighthouse and the mill.

The project has also set up a cycle hire business to meet demand – the number of visitors to the island has doubled to about 600 over the last few years. More recently, the Trust bought the New Kirk from the Church of Scotland, but continues to work on its wider and ambitious plans.

There are over 160 members of the Trust, including all residents of the island. The friends' group has members all over the world. The project as a whole has given the community a huge boost in confidence, and the success and later development of original plans reflects this. The Trust recently received an award of £300,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to undertake further renovations of the lighthouse, including the development of an interpretation centre and other educational resources.

The effects of the Trust's work can be clearly felt in what was a declining and ageing community. The new jobs and facilities have helped ensure that the island will be inhabited – one family has now moved to the island and the Trust hopes to attract more new residents.

Findings

Most of the 26 projects covered had made reasonable progress by the last year of the evaluation, but a few were behind where they had expected to be. There were varying reasons for that. Sometimes projects had relied heavily on volunteer input, and so they had simply taken longer. One project was waiting on a decision by the Scottish Land Court. Others had had to negotiate planning applications or differences of opinion between stakeholders. And some had had to deal with environmental factors beyond their control – for instance, woodland projects can be set back by wind and storm damage. Despite these varying challenges, progress has almost always continued, and only one project has had to transfer ownership to another body. While progress does vary, it is important to note that judgements about ‘more’ or ‘less’ progress can and do change from one year to the next as projects meet or overcome challenges. It would be misleading to judge the success of individual projects on the basis of a few years’ experience.

Sometimes, projects and development officers have been disappointed by their perceived lack of progress, but as often as not this is a result of their high initial levels of enthusiasm and frustration as delays have emerged. The evaluation notes the importance of ensuring that communities are fully aware that this is a long-term commitment and that they must expect to face delays at some stage.

Some projects reported a lull in enthusiasm after projects won initial funding, although the evaluators found little evidence of a fall-off in community support in case-study

projects. Possible lulls are easy to understand. Groups and communities can unite enthusiastically around a bid and celebrate its success, but it is afterwards that the longer-term work begins.

The evaluators suggest that as community ownership becomes more commonplace, there will be more emphasis on developing assets than on winning funding.

The evaluation also identifies imagination and ambition as critical factors in helping to overcome such lulls. Maintaining momentum may be easier if communities can see physical change happening – perhaps through modest environmental improvements or new building. Overall, the evaluation emphasises the importance of networking and communication between communities. This can help them to share experiences, ideas and solutions – although the projects are different many face the same challenges. The role and skills of development officers supporting projects are key to this.

Keeping up momentum and community involvement may prove to be a more important challenge in years to come, but the signs so far have been encouraging. Indeed, numbers involved in some projects have continued to grow after acquisition.

Benefits

The previous section considered the success of running and maintaining projects themselves. While this is a crucial issue and reflects some of our objectives for the programme, equally important are the wider effects that funded projects achieve. The following sections consider some of the general types of benefits that our funding has produced. Examples specific to the case-study projects appear in the relevant chapters of the final report.

Social benefits

- ▶ The very process of developing and running projects has had a positive effect on communities. In many, most if not all residents have been engaged in community groups, fundraising events or consultation. This has given people confidence in their ability to engage with authorities and funders, as well as to implement plans and manage buildings, land and other facilities. Project participants noted the importance of these processes in bringing communities together.
- ▶ In most of the case studies, community participation remained high after the initial success. Development officers felt that owning the assets has been important in maintaining that level of involvement.
- ▶ Those most directly engaged in projects have developed specific and transferable skills – notably negotiating, reaching consensus, management and delegation, but also more practical skills in IT, communication and marketing.
- ▶ There are strong links between most projects and local schools. As well as contributing to children's learning, projects

believe that this process helps to promote ownership and pride from a young age.

- ▶ Perhaps most directly of all, most projects have provided facilities and activities that allow people to meet and spend time together, strengthening bonds between community members and across generations.

Economic benefits

- ▶ Although economic benefits are harder to measure, it is likely that community ownership in the larger projects will help to change social and economic conditions in a way that encourages investment and enterprise. The best example of this is Gigha, where there are now 11 new businesses. At the time of writing, there were 77 full-time equivalent posts on Gigha, whereas before our support there were 50 and jobs were in decline.
- ▶ Smaller projects have seen more modest contributions to economic conditions. There are new community businesses, museums and visitor centres. There have been more opportunities to use local contractors to carry out work, and many projects have established one or two new posts directly.
- ▶ Most projects now have some form of regular income, although they are likely to seek further funding for specific projects and developments.
- ▶ Overall, many of the communities were facing falling populations and economic decline. The projects we have supported can contribute to stemming this decline and to creating an environment that

attracts and retains people who are economically active.

Environmental benefits

- ▶ Projects led by communities seem to have a real enthusiasm for prioritising environmental considerations. Ownership seems to encourage a greater sense of stewardship.
- ▶ Many of the projects involve environmental improvements as part of the development of land or property.
- ▶ There are major improvements in the woodlands. Much of the work has been undertaken by local volunteer groups. In woodlands and elsewhere, many groups have undertaken wildlife diversity studies and protection.
- ▶ Many projects are considering energy generation projects – both wind turbines and bio-fuels. These projects can save money and generate new income.
- ▶ Projects involving building or refurbishment have tended to use approaches and materials in an environmentally sensitive way.

Case study

Dunnet Forestry Trust

The Trust manages the 104-hectare Dunnet Forest (near Thurso in Caithness) on behalf of Scottish Natural Heritage. The Trust received two SLF grants – £35,000 in 2002 to help support a five-year management and development programme, and a further £9000 in 2006 to help sustain the community forestry manager's post. The project has received a range of funding from other sources, including local fundraising.

The project has restructured the forest and planted over 35,000 new trees. It has developed walking and cycle trails to promote recreational use of the forest. Over 1000 schoolchildren have visited the forest so far and have taken part in a range of educational activities. More recently the Trust has planned a range of cultural events and improvements as part of the Highland Year of Culture 2007, including a new sculptural walk and three totem poles, as well as a woodland orchestra.

The Trust has been able to generate income by selling firewood, timber for building and woodchip. The forester also undertakes consultancy work for other land initiatives and the proceeds of that work are re-invested in the Trust's activities.

Overall, the Trust, which now has 430 members, has worked confidently towards its original objectives and has developed a range of new initiatives. It feels that it has worked well as a group to achieve what it has, while successfully helping to foster a local sense of responsibility for the forest and a willingness to engage in its upkeep and further improvement.

Case study

Morvern Community Development Company

The local community council set up the Morvern Community Development Company (MCDC) in 1999. The initial priority was to provide a petrol and diesel filling station in Lochaline, where no such facility was available. That service now brings in about £12,000 a year, and the initial success has spurred MCDC on to a range of local environmental improvements. SLF funding of £2,901 in 2003 was part of a range of income sources, and our grant enabled the community to buy and improve a small area of land around the local war memorial.

Other improvements include a footpath and picnic site, improved local parking facilities and improvement of the area around the local pier.

Between them, the range of projects and activities has notably improved the local environment. Many local residents are now taking care of local land on their own initiative; 98 local residents took part in a recent community planning exercise. Overall, the work of MCDC has improved civic pride in the area, while the gradual expansion of activities has increased the confidence of those involved to identify and carry out further improvement – and in the process identify and win funding from a range of sources. MCDC has recognised the importance of working with other community organisations to do this.

While the enthusiasm and effort of those involved has allowed MCDC to achieve so much, the community is nevertheless aware of the importance of development officer support. For a period of the evaluation that post was empty and progress of plans visibly slowed, but the appointment of a new development officer (with the assistance of a second Land Fund grant of £3000 in 2006) has got plans back on track.

Our support in Morvern has been part of a wider range of funding for a programme of gradual improvement. While we cannot claim credit for all of this work, our initial funding helped achieve a small, specific project, while our later grant has helped the Company to build further on its achievements.

General issues in running projects

Various themes have been important across the programme, emerging from discussions with a range of projects. This section considers some of these.

Developing ideas

A potential risk with the Land Fund was that communities themselves might not come up with the idea to buy or take over management of land, but rather respond to the priorities of others. The evaluation has not found evidence of this having happened. In almost all cases, the initial idea came from the community itself, often through existing groups that then consulted with other residents to develop plans and wider commitment.

Taking plans forward has often required external support, especially when an asset came onto the market and the community had to respond quickly. Development officers were particularly helpful in supporting this process. Projects considered advice they received to be fair and unbiased. Even so, some people involved in projects emphasised that they had still been surprised by the amount and level of commitment that a successful project would require, although nobody regretted having gone ahead.

The evaluators note that unbiased advice and support of this kind will be critical to the success of similar projects. They note that it would be wrong to encourage communities to taken on assets without a full understanding of the challenge and commitment involved – there is a balance to be struck between enthusiasm and realism.

Community participation

Involving communities in projects has been one of the objectives of the programme, and also one of the main reasons for its success. Almost all of the projects involved in the evaluation demonstrated a high level of involvement and interest in their communities, with some involving virtually every household. This is likely to be easier to achieve in well-defined highland and island communities, but the challenges of maintaining that commitment remain.

As plans have progressed, many communities have delegated management and decision-making to a small core group. Nevertheless, wider involvement in fundraising events and open days remains strong. Consulting widely on specific questions, producing newsletters and making the most of word-of-mouth approaches in small communities can also help to sustain this level of participation.

Many projects have relied heavily on volunteer commitment, both to manage and to undertake their work. While this has often led to impressive results, this approach can often rely on individual personalities, so this approach may be somewhat riskier over the longer term. It is important for projects to try to manage any turnover of volunteers so as not to lose skills and experience. Some projects have employed full- or part-time project managers, but these posts rely on adequate and secure funding.

Maintaining high levels of community involvement is likely to be a challenge to projects over time. As projects and their work mature, it may indeed be both logical and desirable for such arrangements to change.

But where high levels of involvement are still important, continued input from development officers is likely to be crucial, especially in projects that rely primarily on volunteers.

Dealing with challenges

As mentioned in 'Project activities and progress', various factors contributed to slower progress for some projects. The most common were:

- time taken to complete feasibility studies, and sometimes a tendency for the findings to be over-optimistic
- ensuring that all funding is in place
- over-emphasis on volunteer input and volunteers' own high expectations
- legal and planning delays
- unpredictable factors, such as weather and damage to assets.

While most of these can be overcome, the evaluators suggest that sharing examples of what might happen and how others dealt with these situations would help to deal with the frustration that such delays can cause. More generally, projects need to balance ambition with realism, and to be flexible in the way that they proceed.

Networks and support

The experience of funded projects and of the agencies that have worked with them is likely to be of great value to other communities considering undertaking similar work. Projects expressed a high regard for the input of the Community Land Unit's advisers, both before and after land acquisition. While many projects have quickly gained confidence in

how they work and what they achieve, the advisers have helped them to look ahead, notably to identify and seek further funding.

The projects themselves are now in a good position to contribute their own expertise through networking and learning events. Those that have been held to date have proved both popular and useful. They are also particularly useful for supporting and inspiring more isolated projects.

Generating income and sustaining benefits

Ensuring future financial stability is the main issue facing projects. Most agree that this means moving away from a tendency to rely on public or charitable support, although many will continue to identify and seek funding for new projects. The communities involved in the evaluation were nevertheless working with a very wide range of statutory and charitable partners, each of which has shown interest in the community ownership model.

Many projects are considering social and community enterprise models to help generate income. In some, there are obvious sources – the woodland projects often readily find a market for their timber, while wind turbines generate income and other projects promote tourism and leisure activities.

In addition, development support and networking to share good practice would seem vital to helping projects to move towards longer-term viability. The evaluators specifically highlighted the importance of monitoring and reporting on progress. This was not a particular focus for development

officers and project managers, but the benefits of being able to measure and report on success to current and potential funders are hard to over-emphasise. One area for particular attention might be to consider how to identify and track benefits that halt decline rather than directly generating new and obvious benefits.

Case study

Killin Care Trust

When an existing care home in Killin (at the western end of Loch Tay in Perthshire) was threatened with closure, the community formed a care trust to take over the home and to run it as a community facility, enabling elderly residents to stay in their local community. The Land Fund made a grant of £94,000 to the Trust in 2002.

A board of volunteer directors now runs the home, where about ten people live at any one time. The home has increased staffing levels to 18 posts, 11 of which are part-time, and 52 people work with the home as volunteers. This is significant in an area where seasonal and often low-paid jobs in tourism predominate.

The directors have faced a number of new challenges in managing and developing the home, but over the course of the project have become more confident. The home has now won an award for the quality of its kitchen and cooking.

Perhaps most importantly, it has enabled many residents who need care to receive it locally, so families and friends can visit more often. The importance of this social continuity in small rural communities is hard to over-emphasise.

The project had not been able to implement all its plans by the end of the evaluation, but hopes to offer more care options, such as respite care, in the future.

The evaluation and the wider context

There is little doubt that the Land Fund has been a critical part of the wider process of land reform in rural Scotland. The evaluators found that with few exceptions the community purchases described would not have been able to take place without its support. But this has not occurred in isolation and the work and support of other bodies was also found to have been crucial in allowing projects to happen. For example the additional funding provided by HIE was also a critical factor in allowing purchases to go ahead. But it is the availability of substantial financial support through the Land Fund that has been key in realising these examples of community ownership.

It is important to note that sometimes our funding was only a small part of a wider project, as in the case of Morvern (see the case study, page 12).

Our evaluation did not set out to compare differing community development models, but rather to investigate the results of our investment – which was primarily in community ownership. Although the projects are still at an early stage, our approach has delivered not only a wide range of improved facilities, environments and other benefits, but also gains in community engagement and confidence.

This does not mean that this is the only way to deliver these kinds of benefits. The evaluators conclude that it is important that future initiatives and investments might usefully consider other community development models and match them with the community's own objectives. But the

evaluation provides evidence of where the asset ownership model has worked and lessons in its implementation.

Meeting our objectives

We set five objectives for the Scottish Land Fund, and the evaluators considered our overall progress towards them. The main considerations appear below.

● Improving opportunities and reducing disadvantage both for communities and individuals in rural areas

A large number of people have been directly involved in setting up, running and working on projects, while wider communities have benefited from the facilities and improvements provided. Some projects have taken more direct account of types of disadvantage, for instance by providing a care home or ensuring disabled access to paths.

A significant number of jobs have been safeguarded, with further jobs being created. Many communities are attracting visitors as a result of the benefits that SLF has delivered, while some even seem to be attracting new residents.

The combination of social and personal benefits, along with new facilities and physical improvements that respond to community need and priorities, have gone some way to addressing some of the aspects of rural disadvantage in Scotland. It is likely that many of these benefits will be sustained, and the experience of the communities that we have supported will help others to make similar improvements elsewhere.

● Encouraging community involvement and participation in land ownership and management

The projects that we funded were required to ensure and promote community involvement

and participation. While there are no standardised figures available, the evaluators estimate that in the 188 communities that received funding, about 5,500 people were directly involved in the groups that set up the projects and undertook the work.

Many more people contributed their views through consultation and other forms of involvement. Environmental projects in particular have often successfully involved schoolchildren, which seems to be a particularly powerful way of widening a sense of involvement.

Our funding, coupled with development officer support, has enabled communities to become more actively involved in deciding how local assets and services are developed, used and managed. The evaluators conclude that although different arrangements may sometimes be more effective, the transfer of assets that community ownership approach entails seems to have been effective at creating and maintaining this momentum.

● Enhancing the environmental diversity and quality of rural Scotland

The evaluators noted a strong emphasis on environmental aspects of projects' work and suggest that the community ownership approach might have directly promoted this.

There has been widespread woodland planting and promotion of biodiversity. More generally, most projects have undertaken direct environmental improvements in and around the areas where buildings or other facilities are located. Local communities, and especially local schools, have been actively involved in that work.

Various projects are contributing to environmental sustainability, most notably through the construction of new wind turbines and involvement in bio-fuel research. Communities have focused strongly on using local materials and energy-efficient designs in building.

While the overall direct effects on environmental diversity and quality are limited by the scale of the programme, achievements to date have highlighted the importance and possibilities of a more environmentally focused approach.

● **Facilitating positive use of the land reform legislation on the community right to buy**

When we launched the Land Fund, the relevant legislation was not yet in force. It was not clear how communities would use any new rights and how our funding would contribute to this. As it happens, there have been relatively few cases where communities have chosen to use the legislation. But where this did happen, the Land Fund was able to offer both financial support and technical assistance.

More generally, the fact that many of our grants were made before the legislation came into force suggests that benefits can be achieved independently of the legislation.

On the other hand, our funding and the objectives underlying the programme may have encouraged a more strategic emphasis – for instance by promoting participation and more sustainable communities rather than, for

instance, preventing new development.

● **Diversifying the pattern of land ownership in rural Scotland**

Overall, the Land Fund brought 65,000 hectares of land into community ownership. This is about 0.8 per cent of the total area of Scotland. Inevitably, a £15 million programme can only go so far in affecting wider patterns of land ownership.

But the Land Fund has successfully supported a wide range of projects that have worked creatively and enthusiastically to take ownership of local land and assets. It has successfully pioneered asset-based community development in Scotland. This approach has delivered impressive gains in community development and involvement.

The effect of the programme – beyond its very real achievements – will perhaps be to act as a collection of experience and learning that other projects, in Scotland and elsewhere, will be able to draw upon to meet their own goals.

Continuing our support for community ownership in Scotland

In 2006 we launched Growing Community Assets (GCA), which builds on our experience of running the Land Fund. By 2009, we intend to have invested at least £50 million in helping communities across Scotland to acquire, manage and further develop community assets.

GCA and our wider Investing in Communities portfolio specifically respond to some of the issues highlighted in the evaluation of the Land Fund in the following ways:

- ▶ We recognise the benefits of asset-based community development and want to make those benefits available across Scotland. The evaluation has demonstrated just what community ownership and management of assets can achieve, so we are making GCA funding available to urban as well as rural communities. We have introduced specific eligibility criteria to ensure that communities genuinely lead projects.
- ▶ We recognise the importance of project development and support. So we have contracted a group of organisations across Scotland to provide a wide range of specialist support to communities, in such areas as property law, capital works, business management, renewable energy and biodiversity.
- ▶ We have broadened our definition of “assets”. As well as helping communities to acquire land and buildings, GCA will also fund community groups to share knowledge and skills in areas related to community ownership. We will also fund activities that help to build the capacity of groups to take on the challenges involved, such as training for directors of trusts.
- ▶ We are actively supporting applicants to develop their ideas. GCA will continue to support groups by providing technical assistance grants for detailed project planning. In addition, through Investing in Ideas, groups can receive start-up grants of up to £10,000 to help them explore and develop ideas for their projects.

More information about Growing Community Assets, Investing in Ideas and our other investment areas is available at www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/scotland

