

DEVELOPMENT TRUSTS ASSOCIATION SCOTLAND

Development Trusts: Community Ownership Economic Impact

Communities across Scotland own large stretches of land in their areas. Having taken over the ownership from past private landowners and public bodies, DTAS members have gone on to effectively manage their land, create important employment opportunities in their respective areas and find new opportunities for their communities. The most recent DTAS Membership survey recorded a total of **164,613** acres of community owned land, taken on by development trusts which has in turn helped to create **1015** jobs across Scotland. This report will first give context to Development Trusts Association Scotland and the data collected in the Members Survey of 2023 before illustrating the economic impact of community owned land across island, urban, rural and small-town development trust with examples from each area.

Development Trusts Association Scotland

The Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS) represents development trusts across Scotland; at the time of writing DTAS covers all of the 32 Local Authority areas in Scotland, apart from Dundee City.

Development trusts are community-led organisations, working across town, city, rural and island locations, combining community-led action with an enterprising approach. They aim to bring about social, economic and environment renewal, creating wealth in communities and keeping it there.

Members Survey 2023

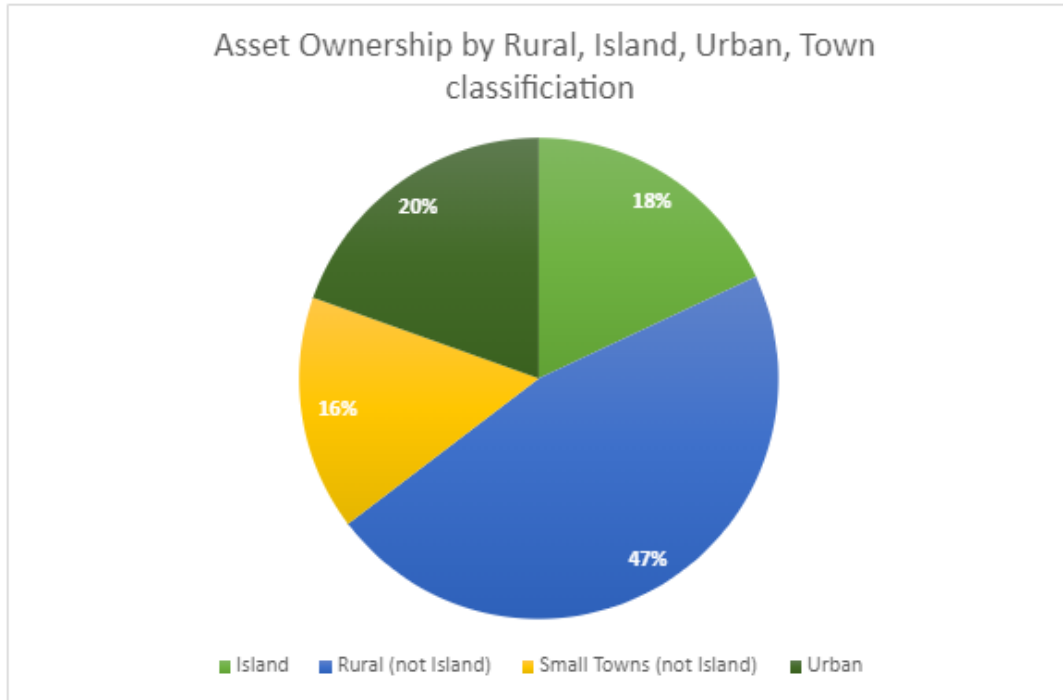
DTAS conducts a comprehensive members survey once every 3 to 4 years. The organisation sees this survey as an invaluable opportunity to update the size and scope of the development trust movement, providing crucial evidence to assist our efforts in representing our members, and strengthening our case in influencing policy and legislation. The questions in the survey related to development trusts' activity, capacity, finances, assets amongst other topics.

The 2023 survey was sent out to the entire DTAS membership in June 2023 and continued to collect results into the end of September of 2023. Overall, the survey attained a response rate of 51%. For a total group size of under 1,000 people, a minimum 30% response rate is the statistical standard to ensure that extrapolated results from the sample are representative of the wider population. The 51% response rate of this survey provides a high level of confidence in the results its analysis will produce.

Findings

Historically, community ownership in Scotland has been stronger in rural areas. According to the Scottish Government's community ownership in Scotland publications [2023](#), almost 80% of all community owned assets are held in rural areas. Only 12% of community owned assets are held in urban areas and 8% are held in small-towns.

Community ownership statistics among asset owning DTAS members mirrors those historic ownership trends. Evidenced in the below graph, almost half of all asset-owning members surveyed are based in rural areas (SURC 5 and 6).

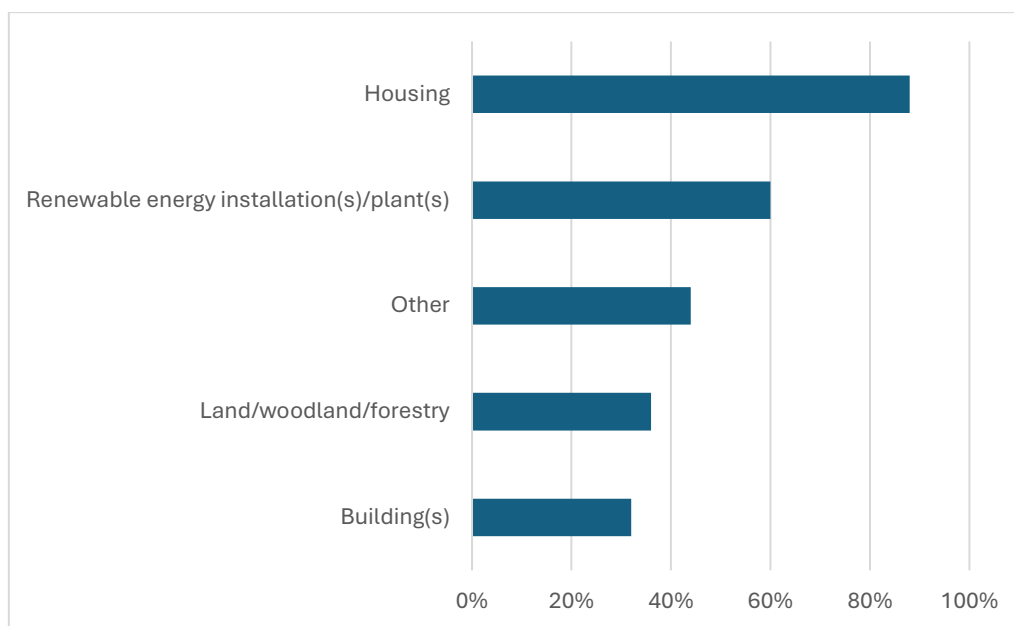


According to the below table, rural, island and small-town groups are far more likely to own assets than urban groups. Only 53% of all development trusts surveyed own an asset, compared to a staggering 96% of island, and 86% of rural development trusts. Though small-town development trusts represent a small proportion of the total percentage of asset owning groups (16%), when looking at asset ownership among this group, 78% of all small-town development trusts surveyed own at least one asset.

| Category | % Asset Owners (in category) | % Of Total (Asset Owners) |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Island | 96% | 18% |
| Rural (not Island) | 86% | 47% |
| Small Towns (not Island) | 78% | 16% |
| Urban | 53% | 20% |
| Total | | 100% |

Island Development Trusts

As mentioned, 96% of island development trusts own physical assets contributing to the services delivered by these resilient and capable communities. As such, island communities recorded a total of **129,086 acres** owned showing the significance of community ownership across Argyll and Bute, Na h-Eileanan Siar, Highlands, Orkney and Shetland.



This bar graph shows the different uses of assets that communities have and the diverse range of needs that community owned land caters to. Housing was the most popular use of land with over 80% of community owned assets being purposed for building homes. By addressing the pressing need for accommodation, island development trusts not only fulfil a vital community requirement but can also, in the long-term, generate revenue through affordable housing projects for rent or ownership.

Renewable energy was one of the most popular uses for community ownership. This is a huge opportunity for development trusts to generate income through generating energy through wind, solar and hydro, helping them become less grant funding dependent and financially resilient.

With this acquisition has come a significant number of opportunities for employment. 84% of island communities hire at least one member of staff with a total of 195 jobs recorded in part time and full-time positions.

The ownership of this land has led to a variety of new and exciting opportunities for the

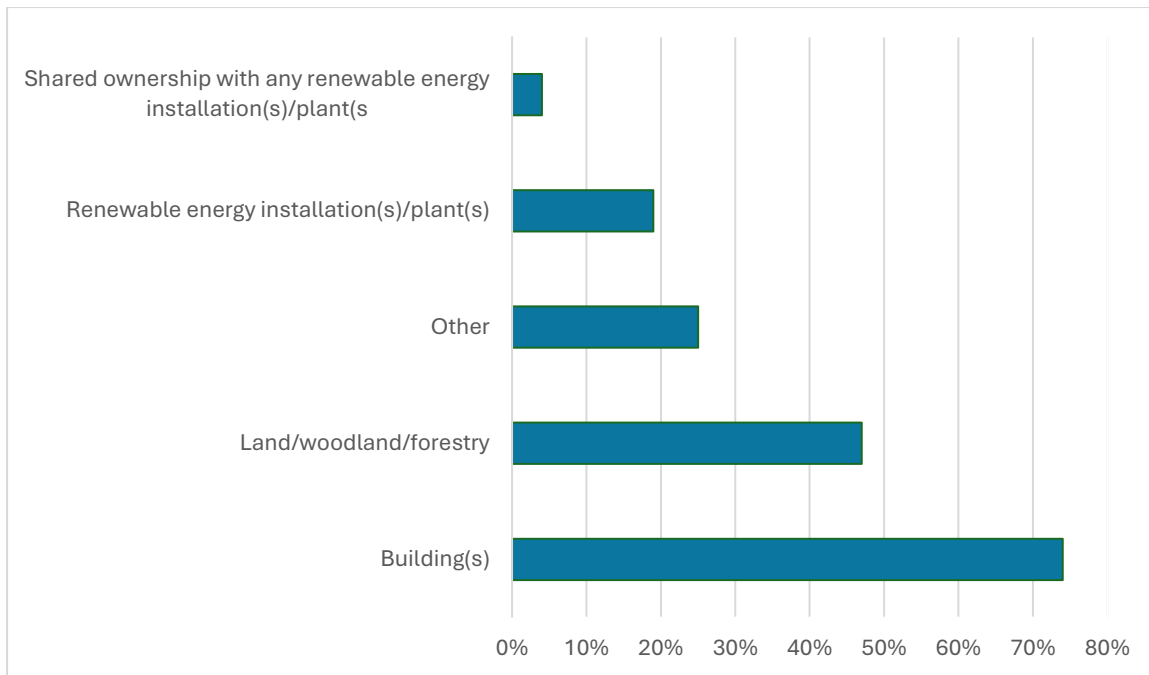
development trusts. From windfarm developments to island ranger services. As such, community owned land has created employment for local people. With opportunity for seasonal work at different points of the year, these communities are creating livelihoods and more and more opportunities for their residents. Further, the added wealth of using local contractors and builders for capital build projects has been another way in which wealth has been generated and kept in these rural island communities.

The diverse land types which exist within community ownership has meant that development trusts have expanded operations to make full use of the land. Whilst crofting and farming the land is a commonality throughout all groups examined, Storras Uibhist on the Outer Hebridean islands of Eriskay, South Uist and Benbecula place a lot of emphasis on deer population management, gamekeeping and fisheries, using the natural resources of their land to generate more wealth.

Another example of best utilising community owned land is the presence of an island ranger. Tiree Community Development Trust, manages a Ranger Service which increases awareness and understanding of the natural surroundings for locals and tourists through education and volunteering opportunities. Additionally, the Ranger Service promotes how to best enjoy the outdoors on Tiree and how to respect the nature and wildlife, promoting sustainable practice. Additionally, due to the revenue made from their wind turbine, Tiree are able to be ambitious in their projects and services they provide. From the redevelopment of two harbours on the island, the building of business units and construction of a fuel station.

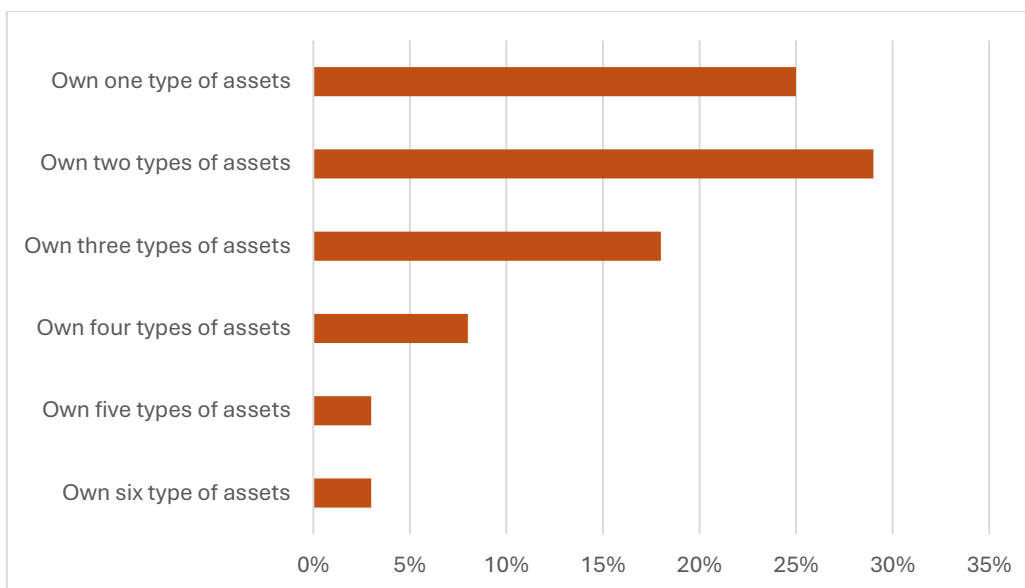
Rural Development Trusts

Communities from rural Scotland has benefitted greatly from community ownership of land. 86% of development trusts from rural areas own at least one asset in Scotland, with a recorded 35,216 acres and 381 jobs created in communities.



The graph above illustrates the different uses of assets which rural development trusts own. Over 70% of these community anchors own their own buildings, 47% own their own land, forestry or woodland and over 20% own other assets such as pontoons, car parks, polytunnels and farms. Like island communities, 19% of rural communities have engaged with generating their own energy. Further, 4% of rural communities have shared ownership of renewable energy with private developers. There is huge variety of how rural communities use their own land and what this ownership enables.

This bar graph highlights the additionality of asset ownership for rural development trusts. Successfully owning and managing assets can allow for increased financial sustainability and growth to purchase new assets. This is demonstrated through the finding that rural development trusts are more likely to own two types of assets (29%) than owning one type of asset (25%). Whilst there are fewer of them, 6% of communities own either five or six different asset types demonstrating the capacity at which these community organisations are operating at.



Through their ownership of assets, one development trust located in the North East, Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust, has been able to create employment opportunities internally and from neighbouring business.

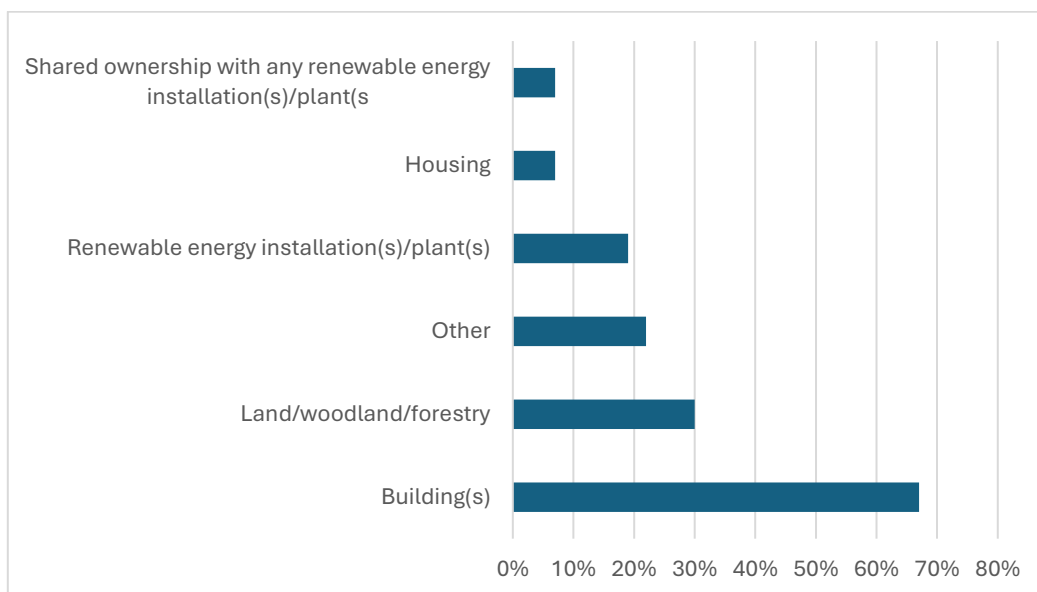
In partnership with The Highland Council, the development trust now owns the Barn, a formerly derelict hotel converted into a modern business centre. Kyle of Sutherland DT uses this as its office and also rents its premises to four local businesses who collectively employ 11 staff; contributing to the regeneration of the village square in Ardgay. Further, in collaboration with a housing developer, the first social houses in thirty years were built into the square, bringing in new population into the Sutherland area.

The development trust was also responsible for the purchase and redevelopment of the Post Office in Bonar Bridge. When the local Post Office closed, community consultations were overwhelmingly supportive of the service staying in Bonar Bridge and for the Trust to purchase the Post Office and surrounding land in 2014. Since the Post Office reopened, two jobs have been retained for the local economy with four additional postal delivery jobs in the area. The ownership has meant that the Trust can be ambitious in their plans as they recently opened a community kitchen garden with raised beds and polytunnels adjacent to the social housing un currently employs 16 staff members and has created 40 jobs since which has seen more than 65 people in those roles. These opportunities in a remote area of the Scotland would not be possible without the dedicated work of the development trust in acquiring their assets and maximising the economic opportunities.

Small Towns Development Trusts

As mentioned, 78% of development trusts from small towns own at least one type of asset. However as seen in the graph below, the large majority (67%) of these assets are

buildings. As such, the total recorded acreage from the members survey amounted to only 99 acres. However, despite the community owned assets not covering huge numbers of acres, development trusts have been able to create 191 jobs.



An example of a successful land-owning development trust has been Beith Trust in North Ayrshire. Having complete a community buyout of the Geisland Estate in 2015, the development trust has helped to create a new vision for the future. Repositioning the Geisland Estate as ‘the Gateway to North Ayrshire’ they have created jobs, enterprise and wealth for the area.

Since purchasing the estate and associated buildings, Beith Community Development Trust has refurbished the houses, sports hall and surrounding areas into a family-friendly zone. Along with 15 acres, the newly introduced coffee shop Mocha Jak’s has been very popular with the local community. Two houses on the estate, Cunningham and Garnock houses, have become available for hosting guests. BCDT are advertising using Airbnb and the hall has been hired out for numerous events and weddings.

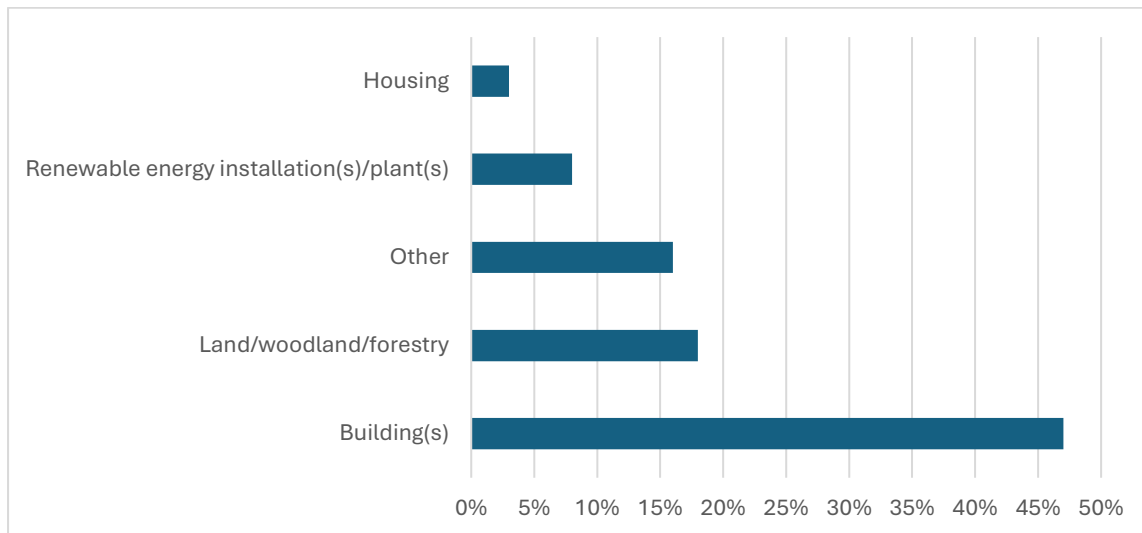
In total, Beith Community Development Trust hire 36 employees, with 9 full time, 12 part time and 15 seasonal, demonstrating the significant economic effect of their community asset. Additionally, Geilsland Estate now supports the delivery of a diverse range of activities, enterprise opportunities and initiatives which enable local people to learn as active informed contributors within their own life and within community life. This approach facilitates a dynamic progressive environment which creates and retains wealth financially, socially, environmentally and culturally.

Urban Development Trusts

Urban development trusts are much less likely to own physical assets. Just 53% of urban groups who answered the members survey own 1 or more assets. Despite the challenges

in securing land in urban areas, development trusts have been able to bring employment and prosperity into their communities. The Members Survey data showed that 84% of asset owning development trust from cities and surrounding areas employed at least one member of staff. The data recorded a total of 248 jobs created.

When considering the types of assets owned by development trusts in urban Scotland, almost half of all the assets are buildings.



Cranhill Development Trust in Glasgow own their own building, purchased from the Church of Scotland after having shared the space for several years. Since owning the asset, Cranhill DT have been able to expand their operations and offer a variety of different services for the community. Altogether, 20 people are employed by the development trust from the operations team, to their own Post Office, employability, education, and integration support for refugees.

Whilst the total acreage of community owned land is low in urban areas, what development trusts have been able to achieve through ownership of predominantly buildings demonstrates the resourcefulness of urban development trusts to create opportunities for local people and have a positive impact on the communities they serve.

In sum, community landownership has been transformative in creating opportunity, resilience and wealth into communities across Scotland. The development trusts presented have illustrated the employment opportunities that are created through community ownership, whether that is a single building or multiple acres of land.

Further information:

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December 2024