

# Churches Crowdfunder Guide

## New Futures: Former Places of Worship



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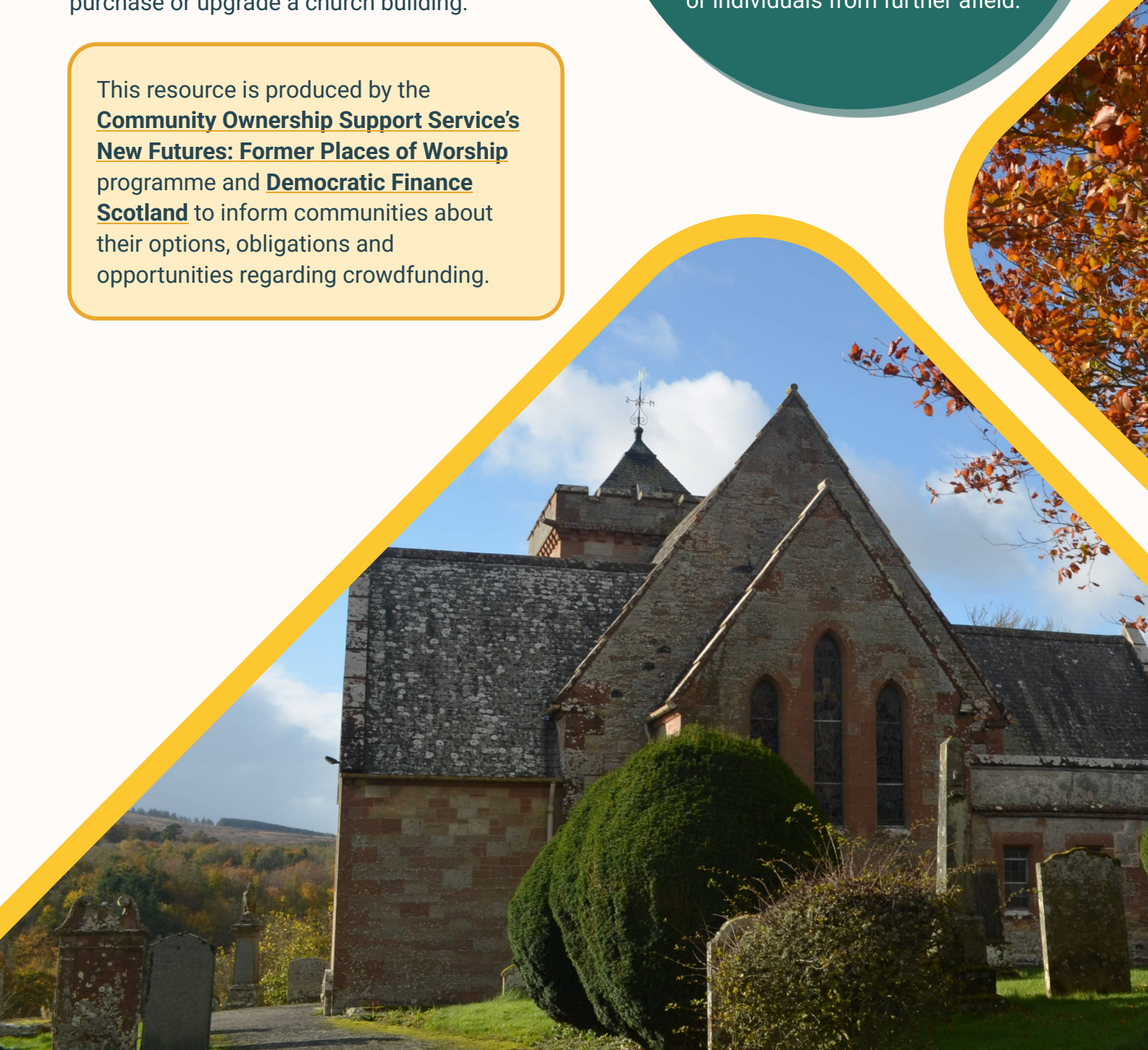
**This guide to crowdfunding is for community-based groups in Scotland who are considering taking ownership of a former place of worship.**

With the large number of churches being disposed of across the country, and with a competitive funding environment, communities have been increasingly exploring crowdfunding as an option to raise the funds needed to purchase or upgrade a church building.

This resource is produced by the **Community Ownership Support Service's New Futures: Former Places of Worship** programme and **Democratic Finance Scotland** to inform communities about their options, obligations and opportunities regarding crowdfunding.

## What is crowdfunding?

Crowdfunding is the raising of sums of money from a group of people. It can be an alternative, or in addition, to seeking grant funding or bank loans. It instead looks to your supporters to contribute to your project. This might include members of your community, or individuals from further afield.



## Why run a crowdfunding campaign?

The main reason for running a crowdfunding campaign is to raise money and build community engagement and support for your project.

It's an effective way to harness the support of your network into readily available cash to spend, often in cases where other funding and finance may not be available.

With regards to your place of worship, you could use crowdfunding to raise the money for:

- an early-stage feasibility study
- purchase of the asset
- working capital
- refurbishments
- staffing
- professional fees
- match funding

Crowdfunding is a flexible way to raise funds that are not as restrictive as grant funding.



There are other benefits too. Crowdfunding campaigns can do the following:

- Generate buzz and excitement around your idea and build community engagement and support
- Galvanise people to donate when they see others doing the same
- Encourage people to support you in other ways e.g. through volunteering, advocating or advertising
- Leverage match funding or local philanthropic giving from high-net-worth individuals

The support of a successful crowdfunding campaign can also lend the project credibility in other ways, such as making other funders, suppliers and partners more willing to take it seriously.



## Case Study

### St Columba's Church, Eigg – Solas Eige

Solas Eige, Scottish Gaelic for 'Light of Eigg', is an organisation which was set up by locals on the Isle of Eigg to purchase St Columba's Church, which had been earmarked for disposal by the Church of Scotland.

In September 2025, Solas Eige was awarded a grant of £92,703 from the Scottish Land Fund to purchase the building, with plans to transform the church in to a 'vibrant hub for heritage, culture and community life on the island'.

However, the Scottish Land Fund grant alone was not enough to purchase the building. An extra £6,000 was required as 'match funding' to meet the Church of Scotland's valuation. With an effective campaign the group managed to surpass that figure, raising £6,440 within 35 days.

Encouraged by their success raising the acquisition costs through a mix of grant funding and crowdfunding, Solas Eige have begun a new crowdfunding campaign to upgrade the building fabric, emphasising to donors that their contributions will "make our applications for funding stronger".

#### OUR NEW CAMPAIGN

##### RAISE THE ROOF FOR SOLAS EIGE!

Our next step is to repair the roof: we must fix the leaky skewes, treat and replace timbers, take out the Ballachulish slates and check each one, install insulation and put the slates back on the roof! The cost is for all this work is £153,000. To make our applications for funding stronger, we need to raise enough funds ourselves and this where YOU can make a difference!

You can support us with a donation now. And with Zeffy, a free platform for charities, 100% of your money will come to us...

**TOGETHER WE CAN DO IT!**

[Donate now](#)



**RAISE THE ROOF FOR SOLAS EIGE**

**Help us transform St Columba's into the Solas Eige Centre**

Before we can open the doors, we must fix the leaky roof and install insulation. The cost is £153,000 - and we need your help!

Every donation makes a difference:

- £25 helps buy tiles
- £100 supports skilled repair work
- £500 helps secure a section of roof for decades

Together we can protect the past and build the future.

**Donate today:**  
<https://www.zeffy.com/en-GB/donation-form/raise-the-roof-for-solas-eige>

| Screenshot taken from [www.solaseigetHELIGHTofEigg.org/#our-new-campaign](http://www.solaseigetHELIGHTofEigg.org/#our-new-campaign) on 02/11/2025

## What platforms could we use, and do they charge?

There are two main crowdfunding platforms in the UK, [Crowdfunder UK](#) and [GoFundMe](#). Both platforms charge small transaction fees for not-for-profit community projects.

At the time of publishing, provided that you are a registered charity:

- **Crowdfunder charges 2.4% + 20p (per pledge) + VAT** on UK/EU cards, and no fee to host your campaign on its platform.
- **GoFundMe charges 1.9% + 20p (per pledge) VAT included**, and no fee to host your campaign on its platform.

For instance, if you were to raise £50,000 via Crowdfunder, once you include the transaction fee, VAT and payment processing fees (typically 1.5%-2%), your total campaign fees could be in the range of £2,000-£3000.

However, both platforms often run promotions or offer discounts for community or charity campaigns that can reduce this fee further, so it's worth checking at the time.

For further information, visit: [GoFundMe Pricing and Fees](#) or [Crowdfunder Fees](#).



## How much could you raise?

There can be huge variability in the success of crowdfunding campaigns and how much you raise will depend on many factors, such as the capacity to commit time and effort, size of your existing networks, campaign visibility and the attractiveness of your proposal. When planning a crowdfunder you should consider how many people might donate, and what the average contribution might be.

Democratic Finance Scotland's experience supporting groups and looking at the crowdfunding market more widely suggests that you could reach up to £50,000 with a proactive, engaging and well-organised campaign. There are also examples of groups raising a lot more, but these examples are often outliers with unique aspects.

## Targets

There are generally two types of targets you can set during your campaign – minimum and stretch. It's worth identifying the minimum amount you need to make this phase of your project happen, and what feels like an achievable goal. Once your campaign is live and you reach your minimum target, you can add a 'stretch' goal to raise even more.

If you don't reach your stretch target, you will still receive the money you've raised, which is typically paid out around 14 days after the campaign has closed.

## Here are some examples:

The campaign by **Bedrule Church Future** to purchase Bedrule Parish Church in the Scottish Borders raised a total of **£63,229.09** through a mixture of fundraising approaches. As part of this, the organisation used fundraising platform **Givey**, which raised **£1,860 from 13 donations** as at 4 March 2026.

Bedrule Church Future

[www.bedrulechurch.co.uk/](http://www.bedrulechurch.co.uk/)

**£1,860.00**

raised from 13  
donations

 Donate



Screenshot taken from [www.givey.com/bedrulechurch](http://www.givey.com/bedrulechurch) on 04/03/2026

**Solas Eige** sought to crowdfund £6,000, a percentage of the total purchase cost of St Columba's Church on the Isle of Eigg as a 'match' to grant funding from the Scottish Land Fund. The campaign raised **£6,440 from 203 supporters on Crowdfunder.co.uk**, surpassing the organisation's target.

### Rescuing Eigg's historic church for the community

Isle of Eigg, United Kingdom



**£6,440**

Successful

203 supporters

 Share

Need to raise money?  
Get started with Crowdfunder

Screenshot taken from [www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/rescuing-historic-church-for-the-community-on-the-isle-of-eigg](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/rescuing-historic-church-for-the-community-on-the-isle-of-eigg) on 04/03/2026

### Save Troon Old Parish

Troon, South Ayrshire, United Kingdom




**£6,010**

raised so far

172 supporters

 Donate

 Share

 Crowdfunder is secure  
Your payment details are protected

The overall campaign by **Troon Development Trust** to purchase Troon Old Parish Church raised a total of **£18,041.71** through events, pledges and direct bank transfers. As at 4 March 2026, the online campaign raised **£6,010 from 172 donations on Crowdfunder**.

Screenshot taken from [www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/save-troon-old-parish](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/save-troon-old-parish) on 04/03/2026

## Crowdfunding in a hurry

To undertake a crowdfunding campaign, your group would ideally be incorporated with its own bank account. Due to the speed at which Church of Scotland churches are being disposed of, and the short notice that communities are given to prepare a community buyout, some communities need to raise money as soon as possible, prior to having an incorporated group and/or a dedicated bank account.

## Conduit banking

In most cases, we would recommend groups take pledges. But in some circumstances, community groups may need to make an agreement with another organisation who can hold funds on their behalf for a short period and for a specific purpose. If this is the case for your community, please speak to your Churches Advisor about it as soon as possible.

## Pledges

If you are waiting for a bank account, and you have people wishing to donate to your campaign, you may consider collecting pledges.

**A pledge is a promise to give your campaign money.** Pledgers will fill out a form (which you create and provide), promising to pay their pledge at a later date.

Your pledge form will state under what circumstances a pledge will be called in, such as when you are in a position to purchase the building.

Having pledgers lined up can help your campaign start strong, as you will be able to say how much you've raised, encouraging more people to add to the fund. Pledges are also good evidence of community support for funders, and the Church of Scotland.

In the majority of cases, pledges are not legally binding, but they can be. We recommend seeking legal advice should you wish your pledges to be binding.

Pledges are eligible for Gift Aid.



## Here is an example pledge form:



### Charity Pledge Form: Troon Development Trust

I, [Your Full Name], pledge to support Troon Development Trust with a donation at a later date if called in. Call in will be when we are in a position to put in a bid for the Troon Old Parish.

1. Donor Information:

- Name:
- Address:
- Email:
- Phone:

2. Pledge Details:

- Amount: £
- Frequency: (Please tick one)
  - One-Off Donation
- Purpose (Optional): (e.g., Purchase/Development of Troon Old Parish)
  - Unrestricted (For the charity's general needs)
  - Restricted (To be used for: Only Church project)

3. Payment Method:

- Bank Transfer (**Bank Account no.** [REDACTED] **Sort Code** [REDACTED])

4. Gift Aid Declaration (UK Only - Increases your donation by 25% at no extra cost!):

- I want to Gift Aid my donation to Troon Development Trust. I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of tax claimed on all my donations in that tax year, it is my responsibility to pay any difference.
- Yes, I want to Gift Aid my donation.
- No, I do not wish to Gift Aid my donation.

5. Signature & Date:

- Signature:
- Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Pledge form downloaded from [www.troondevelopmenttrust.co.uk/pledging](http://www.troondevelopmenttrust.co.uk/pledging) on 04/03/2026

## Crowdfunding campaign checklist

### Planning your campaign

- Define the crowdfunding requirements for your project
- Identify key dates: funding deadlines, campaign start and end dates, community events, etc.
- Come up with your key messaging to promote the campaign and gauge interest from the community
- Establish a working group and allocate roles to manage and promote the campaign effectively
- Set realistic minimum and stretch financial targets for your campaign

### Identifying your supporters

- Map potential supporters of your campaign
- Build a contact list of potential supporters and donors
- Decide how you'll reach your supporters
- Prepare key supporters to donate on day one of your campaign

### Creating your campaign

- Create online crowdfunding page - stick to your key messaging
- Produce promotional materials: online, posters, flyers, banners
- Film a 1-2 minute campaign video to use across platforms
- Align your campaign with your community engagement strategy

## Launch your campaign!

### Running your campaign

- Host an event to launch your campaign, or align with another event in the community calendar
- Share the campaign widely through identified channels and support networks. i.e. community groups, local businesses, social media, mailing lists, etc.
- Provide regular updates about the campaign to supporters and donors online and at community events
- Keep up collective responsibility throughout the campaign to ensure your group maintains its momentum

### Ending your campaign

Ending the campaign well can help secure final donations and maintain trust. Set a clear end date for your campaign and communicate this clearly to your supporters

| N.B., this checklist and timeline is a guide, and your campaign may be different to this

Planning  
4 weeks

Preparing  
4 weeks

Delivering  
6 weeks

## What makes a successful crowdfunding campaign?

A successful crowdfunder can be broken down into four stages: planning, creating your campaign, identifying supporters and running your campaign.



### Planning your campaign

Good planning is essential to ensure you meet your funding targets. When planning your crowdfunding campaign you should consider **some key questions:**

- What are you raising money for?
- How do your plans fit into your organisation's wider vision?
- How much do you need to raise?
- Is there a deadline?
- Will you use a crowdfunding platform?
- Why might people support you?
- What might you need to offer in return for support?
- How will you reach your potential supporters?

This is also a good time to enlist the help of volunteers who may be able to assist with:

- social media
- videography
- contacting potential donors
- community engagement

You should think about key dates within the campaign, which typically runs for around 6 weeks. Try getting half a dozen people lined up to donate the day the campaign launches. If you are running a very local campaign you might want to align to other local events. You should also think about how different times of year – such as school holidays or Christmas – might affect how your supporters engage with you.

If you are a charity, donations to your campaign can attract Gift Aid, although if you are offering rewards or benefits to supporters **this may affect your eligibility.**

**Getting off to a good start greatly improves your chances of success:** according to [fundable.com](https://www.fundable.com), crowdfunding campaigns that gain **30% of their goal within the first week** are more likely to succeed than those which don't.

## Creating your campaign materials

The next step is to prepare the materials you'll use to share your campaign. What you need will vary depending on how you intend to run your campaign.

Most crowdfunding campaigns now take place online, often using a crowdfunding platform such as [Crowdfunder UK](#) or [GoFundMe](#) which can provide a quick and easy way for people to pay. If you are using a platform, you will need to create a campaign page which should tell your story in a captivating way.

The campaign page should give the reader all the key information but still be concise and attention grabbing. They need to decide whether to support you, which means understanding what you are raising funds for, why it's important and why they should support it. Think about your story, why it's unique to your community and what retaining and repurposing the asset would mean.

You will have the option to add images and videos to bring your page to life. Videos can be an effective way to get the attention of supporters, and the Democratic Finance team has a microgrant available to cover some of the costs. Contact [Democratic Finance Scotland](#) to find out more.



It's generally best to keep your video short and engaging – around 1-2 minutes is ideal. This can then be used on any social media platform to attract further attention. To save costs, ask if anyone in your community has expertise in this area and if they could volunteer some time to create a simple video which tells the story, perhaps including:

- footage of the asset inside and out
- relevant history
- interviews with those involved in the project to explain why it's important
- future plans

**Think about other promotional materials you could create to advertise the crowdfunder:**

- a poster with a QR code linking to the crowdfunding page which could be put up around the community
- a banner hung outside the asset to get people's attention
- leaflets with a QR code which could be put through people's doors

Remember to keep the messaging succinct!

**Data from Crowdfunder suggests that campaigns with videos are 86% more likely to succeed than those without.**

## Case Study

### Troon Old Parish Church – Troon Development Trust

Troon Development Trust has been working to bring Troon Old Parish Church into community ownership. The church building is situated in the centre of Troon, with plenty of footfall passing. To take advantage of this, Troon Development Trust created a large banner, and put it outside the building, encouraging local people to get involved and donate to the campaign. They have also used the banner during community events, and in press releases.



MAUREEN LEONARD

Organisers of the trust have held various community events to back the plan

Screenshot taken from [www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3wn9g043xyo](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3wn9g043xyo) on 06/03/2026 Article by Jonathan Geddes - BBC News Scotland

Image of Troon Old Parish Church with banner, from Development Trusts Association Scotland – image taken July 2025.





## Identifying your supporters

It's important to consider who will donate to your campaign and start to build a network of these people where possible. Preparing them to donate before the campaign goes live will be beneficial, as once others see they have donated, they will be more likely to follow.

### Think about:

- The local community
- Diaspora – particularly from the place of worship itself
- Businesses, schools, and other local organisations
- High-Net-Worth Individuals (HNWI)

## Case Study

### Bedrule Parish Church - Bedrule Church Future

Faced with the imminent closure and disposal of their local church in 2023, the local community gathered in their mutual concern for the future of Bedrule Church and formed the SCIO Bedrule Church Future to bring the building into community ownership.

The church was built in 1804 and holds special significance to the Turnbull Clan which paid for the building's exceptional stained-glass windows. Once it was informed by the Church of Scotland that the building had been deemed surplus to requirement and would be sold, Bedrule Church Future contacted the international Turnbull Clan Association to help raise the necessary funds to purchase the building and bring it into community ownership.

Through the Turnbull Clan Association, which includes members in USA, Canada and Australia, the international Turnbull diaspora was asked to donate to help the community buy the building. The Turnbull Clan Association raised £17,421.09, which was matched by the local community's contributions of £43,948.00. An additional £1,860 was raised via Givey, achieving a total of £63,229.09.

### Clan's American cousins help save historic Borders church



Screenshot taken from [www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9w12d5gwj9o](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9w12d5gwj9o) on 06/03/2026 Article by Thomas Martin - BBC News Scotland



## Running your campaign

Once your campaign page is ready and it's time to go live, spreading the word is vital to its success. Most campaigns typically run from 4-6 weeks.

**Some things to consider when running your campaign are:**

- **Collective responsibility** – spreading the load between the group and using people's strengths means the momentum can be kept up for the duration of the campaign

- **Tag on to local events** where possible throughout the campaign to raise awareness about your plans amongst the wider community

- **Marketing and action plan** – creating a plan of action in terms of marketing and delegating tasks will keep the campaign focused

- **Think about your local networks** – friends, family, businesses, who might donate and get their contact details

- **Enlist volunteers with particular strengths** – for example, who is comfortable picking up the phone or knocking on someone's door to ask them to donate? Who is good at marketing and social media?

- **Enlist local businesses' support** – they could be willing to offer financial or in-kind support, or simply put a poster in their window

- **Organise a dedicated launch event**, or coordinate with a significant event in the community calendar to let people know the campaign has begun and encourage early donations

- **Think about how people in your community like to engage** – not everyone has social media or is digitally literate, so adapting methods is key to encouraging early donations

- **A well organised board or steering group can make all the difference;** ensuring volunteers are enlisted, promotional materials are arranged and networks of support are created can increase early donations

- **Give regular updates on your campaign page and social media** to keep people informed and maintain momentum

## Delivering your project

Once you have raised the money, keep in touch with your donors by posting regular updates on the campaign page and social media, as these people may become your future supporters, volunteers or board members.

### Ending your campaign

Ending your campaign well is important, to get a final boost of donations, and to be transparent and clear with your supporters and donors.

When you feel it's time to end your campaign, set a date and get the word out to your supporters and donors. This will incentivise those who intend to donate, but haven't yet, to contribute to your campaign. Send out reminders in the build-up to the end date, and a final thank you to your donors once the campaign is closed.

Call in any outstanding pledges if you have met the conditions of pledge.

It is essential to communicate regularly with your donors, being transparent about how much is raised, what your plans are, and eventually what you do with the money. Not doing so risks reputational damage to your organisation.

Try sending a 1-month update to donors, and setting up a dedicated page on your website, which you update regularly as the project progresses.

Ending your campaign well is especially important if you wish to do another crowdfunding campaign, as this will influence your supporters' willingness to donate in future.



### Rewarding your donors

As part of your campaign, you may wish to offer 'rewards' - incentives to encourage people to donate sums of money. It's important to consider your capacity as a group when thinking about offering rewards or not – and of any financial implications involved. Some examples that other groups have offered include:

- donated commercial goods
- name and recognition rewards such as plaques
- stairs inscribed with donors' names
- 'buy a brick' in the building
- trees or plants in outdoor space

**Rewards aren't required or necessarily expected as part of a crowdfunder so don't feel that you have to offer them.**

## Solas Eige - Commercial Rewards

To promote their crowdfunding campaign, **Solas Eige** offered rewards to those who donated large sums. These rewards were commercial goods with a financial value attached to them, donated by artists and businesses affiliated with the island, helping to attract larger donations.

Screenshot taken from [www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/rescuing-historic-church-for-the-community-on-the-isle-of-eigg](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/rescuing-historic-church-for-the-community-on-the-isle-of-eigg) on 06/03/2026

### The Prizes

We have 11 great prizes for you to win:

- Signed Martin Parr print of one of Eigg's most iconic views: Martin Parr is possibly one of the best UK photographers. He kindly donated and signed his photograph of the famous Lageorna washing line with the Cuillins of Rum in the background. Worth between £300 and £500.
- This natural cask strength malt whisky from the Talisker distillery on Skye was bottled at 60% ABV in 1997 to celebrate the historic Eigg community buy-out of 1997. With few remaining bottles available of the original batch of 252, this single malt which has no-age-statement or year of distillation, is a rare collector's item. Worth £300
- Traditional and sturdy, this log basket was created out willow organically grown on the croft by talented "All about Willow" duo Pascal and Catherine, the suppliers of heritage baskets to the cult TV series Outlanders. It will become an heirloom to treasure for years to come. Worth £250.
- 5 signed copies, retailing at £20, of "Eigg, the story of an Island", by Eigg author and local historian Camille Dressler. This new edition features a foreword by Dr Kenny Taylor, Chair of the Scottish Wildlife Trust to mark its 60th anniversary.
- 3 X 6 beer packs of Eigg Brewery's vegan, unfiltered and unfiltered Pilsner and IPA (3 of each in each pack). Worth £22.50 each.

All of the above 11 prizes will be drawn as individual prizes on FRIDAY 23 November 2024. Winners will be announced a week later on our website: [www.solaseigeshiningthelightofeigg.org](http://www.solaseigeshiningthelightofeigg.org)



### Above £50

Pledges will receive :

- I SAVED THE TOWER certificate
- I SAVED THE TOWER Fridge magnet
- I SAVED THE TOWER T Shirt

### Above £200

Pledges will receive :

- I SAVED THE TOWER certificate
- I SAVED THE TOWER Fridge magnet
- I SAVED THE TOWER T Shirt
- A large plaque with your name and favourite movie/show/author located in a prominent position through-out the Tower (15cm x 10cm)

### Above £1000

Pledges will receive :

- I SAVED THE TOWER certificate
- I SAVED THE TOWER Fridge magnet
- I SAVED THE TOWER T Shirt
- Your name on our huge Keystone founders Boards situated in the Tower's Atrium.

Screenshot taken from [www.savethetower.co.uk/pledge](http://www.savethetower.co.uk/pledge) on 06/03/2026

## Save The Tower, Helensburgh - Recognition Rewards

The campaign to bring **The Tower in Helensburgh** into community ownership offered rewards to its donors. Along with certificates, fridge magnets and an invitation to the 'Donators Day', which all donors would receive, those who donated higher sums would have their names included in permanent plaques and signage around the church. Importantly, the campaign stated the size and location of the plaques and signage within the building, ensuring donors' expectations were set appropriately.

## Our support

The **New Futures: Former Places of Worship** programme launched in January 2025 to advise and support community groups considering bringing former places of worship into community ownership. The programme is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic Environment Scotland, and DTAS. The team includes three Advisors and a Programme Officer.

If you're looking for advice about bringing a local church into community ownership, please contact your **Churches Advisor**:

- Audrey Dunn, North Scotland [audrey.dunn@dtascot.org.uk](mailto:audrey.dunn@dtascot.org.uk)
- Claire Martin, South & Central Scotland [claire.martin@dtascot.org.uk](mailto:claire.martin@dtascot.org.uk)
- Harry Whitmore, South & Central Scotland [harry.whitmore@dtascot.org.uk](mailto:harry.whitmore@dtascot.org.uk)

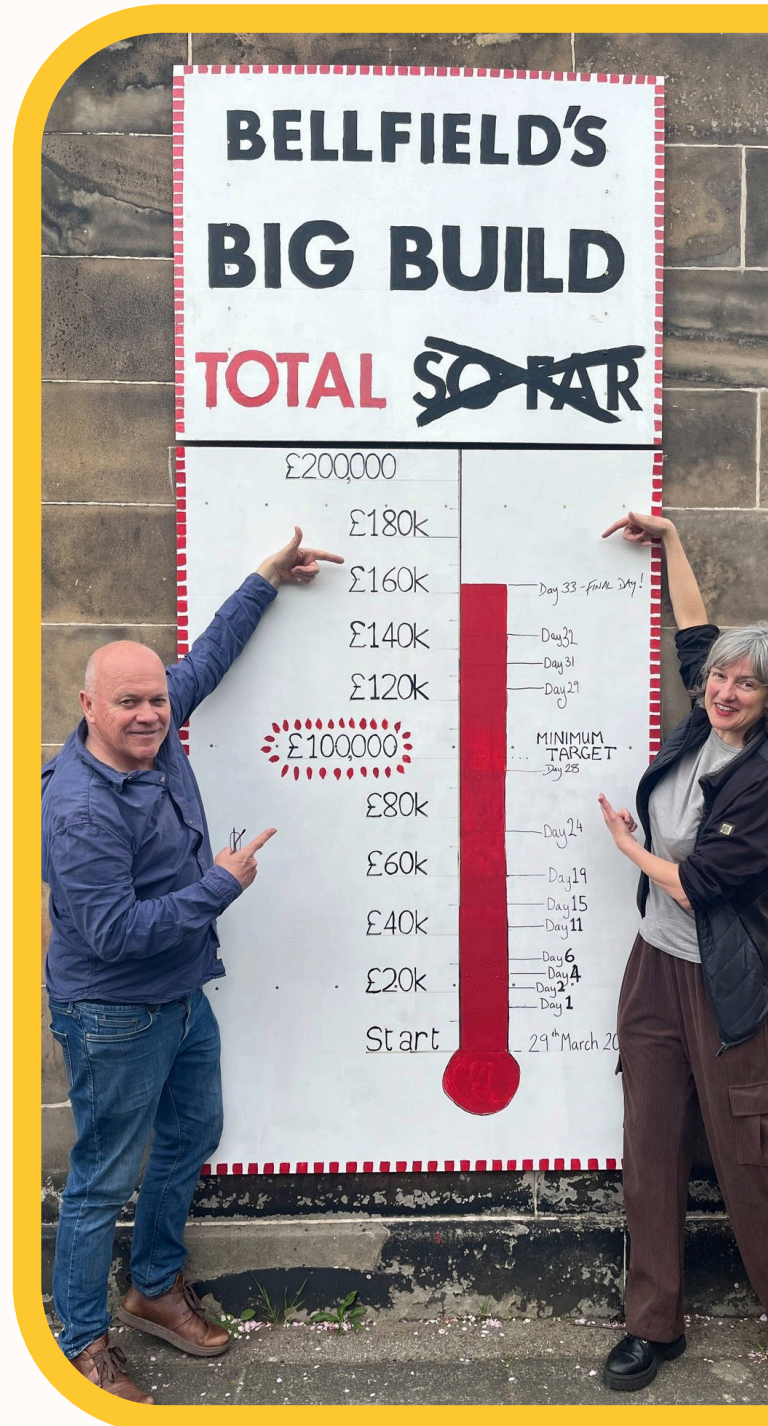
The **Democratic Finance Scotland** team's crowdfunding support includes:

- Planning the campaign
- Marketing and community engagement support during the campaign
- A small micro-grant to support campaign costs such as promotional materials, events, campaign videos, or social media.

**This support is light-touch and free to community-led organisations either with, or with a desire to adopt:**

- A democratic, member-led and accessible governance structure.
- An enterprising, empowering and sustainable approach.

**To find out more please get in touch with [katie.little-sadler@dtas.org.uk](mailto:katie.little-sadler@dtas.org.uk) or [julia.rolim@dtascot.org.uk](mailto:julia.rolim@dtascot.org.uk)**



## Appendices

These case studies detail the experience of two community groups which have used crowdfunding to raise funds to bring church buildings into community ownership. Thank you to members of the Save The Tower campaign and Bedrule Church Future for their contributions to these case studies.

**Green text was written by the group itself**

### Appendix 1: The Tower, cinema and arts venue – Helensburgh

Link to campaign website: [HOME | Save The Tower Arts](#)

#### Who is the group and what is its aim?

Save The Tower campaign is a small but determined group of former staff, volunteers and patrons of the Tower Art Centre and Cinema in Helensburgh, aiming to take the building into community ownership. The group plans to continue the provision of cinema, arts and events spaces. The Venue @ Saint Columba Limited is the Company Limited by Guarantee with charitable status which will acquire the building and run it once reopened.

#### What is the community like?

Helensburgh is located on the north side of the Firth of Clyde in the West of Scotland. The town has a population of around 15,000 people.

“It has some very affluent areas, but also some areas classed within the 10% and 20% most deprived in Scotland, as measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

“The wider Helensburgh and Lomond area includes growing communities, not least the nearby Faslane naval base where employment is increasing considerably. This wider catchment area has over 45,000 households, with a total population of just under 98,000.

“People within our area have shown strong support for the project. More than 1200 people with a Helensburgh Community Council postcode responded to our survey within three weeks in September 2024, 95% of them supporting the community buyout. Over 275 people have since become members of our Limited Company.”

## What church building is the fundraising for?

The Tower cinema and arts venue, originally Saint Columba's Church, is a B-listed building prominently located in the centre of Helensburgh. Since its opening in 2014, the venue was run by Visit Helensburgh and provided events spaces and a cinema for the town. In 2023, the venue closed. In response to this, the community rallied to bring The Tower into community ownership and begin its services once again.

## What platform did you use, and why?

"We used GoFundMe to raise money to fund the campaign. It is recognisable, straightforward and easily circulated, however, it does charge a percentage to use. Various in-person events were organised as part of the fundraising campaign, including films, bands and a quiz. We took part in local exhibitions and markets, raising awareness and doing bucket collections."

## What were the easiest / most challenging things?

"As an arts centre, we were easily able to source photo and video evidence of the venue in operation, and many people were already aware of its value to the community. The most challenging part was the time and effort required for fundraising and awareness events, which were the most effective way of engaging support."

## What was the sales pitch?

The sales pitch outlines the reasons for crowdfunding, emphasising that it will demonstrate community support and that the funds raised will ultimately supplement grant funding from the Scottish Land Fund. It also summarises the objectives of the project and the importance of the building as a community space.

Hello!

We are The Tower Community Buyout Steering Group. We are running the campaign to save the Tower Cinema & Digital Arts Centre for our Helensburgh Community. Saving the Tower will require a community buyout. To achieve this we are starting the community buy-out process with the Scottish Land Fund. This is a complex process which also requires significant support from our community in order to be successful. We envisage that a number of events and awareness campaigns will need to be funded and run to drum up the support we will need to demonstrate from the community. This GoFundMe campaign is to raise the funds required to support these activities, which we all hope will lead to a successful purchase of the Tower for the community and importantly, set-up the Tower for a bright new Future at the Heart of Helensburgh's Entertainment & Arts scene! Please support us in our efforts by providing a small donation to fund our activities!

| Screenshot taken from [www.gofundme.com/f/save-the-helensburgh-tower-cinema](https://www.gofundme.com/f/save-the-helensburgh-tower-cinema) on 09/03/2026

To supplement its media and events-based campaign, the group created an informative video promoting the campaign and showing the interior spaces within the building. The group also used its website to provide more information about the project, explain the pledge scheme and direct interested people to the online fundraiser.

### **Was there anything unique about the campaign?**

Regular community engagement events were organised at The Tower and a newsletter was launched to update supporters. In addition to the GoFundMe page, a scheme was created to allow pledges. A system of incentives was organised which included rewards available to supporters who pledged.

### **How much did the group hope to raise?**

The group's original goal was to raise £51,000, however following the building condition survey and building and equipment valuations, the target increased to £60,000.

### **How much did the group actually raise?**

Prior to securing Scottish Land Fund grant funding, the group raised approximately £25,000 through donations and events. Through the GoFundMe page, £11,181 was raised from 258 donations, at the time of publication.

### **Did you have any other sources of income, e.g. grant funding?**

In April 2025, the group received a £205,900 grant from Scottish Land Fund which covered approximately 80% of the acquisition cost.

### **What was the outcome?**

“Our application to the Scottish Land Fund was successful and we have raised sufficient money through pledges and fundraising to purchase the building. At time of writing, we are ready to purchase at the conclusion of legal negotiations with the current owner.”

## Appendix 2: Bedrule Church Future

Link to organisation website: [Bedrule Church Future](#)

### Who is the group and what is its aim?

Bedrule Church Future is “a small group of people from Rulewater and nearby, gathered in their mutual concern for the future of Bedrule Church”. The group is a registered Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO).

### What is your community like?

“Bedrule is a hamlet set in Rulewater, a very rural and beautiful valley west of Jedburgh in the Scottish Borders. The church serves the small Rulewater community (only 156 Voters registered), but the nation-wide and diaspora communities attached to the church are important.”

### What church building are you fundraising for?

“We are fundraising for Bedrule Church. The current building, built in 1804 and extensively improved in 1914, is well maintained evident both internally and externally.”

### What platform did you use, and why?

“We initially considered JustGiving and several others, but finally decided upon Givey because we considered it was more appropriate for a relatively small organisation such as Bedrule Church Future (BCF). Whilst it facilitates online donations, we recognised that not everyone likes to donate online, so people were also able to donate by cheque, BACS or cash. Givey does charge fees, as do other platforms, however, we considered they were reasonably comparable with other providers.”

### What were the easiest / most challenging things?

Bedrule Church Future found that a challenging aspect of the process was working within a short timescale and navigating tight deadlines.

The group also found that in “such a small community, volunteers for the long term are slow in coming forward due to other commitments.”

“On the positive side, we were pleasantly surprised to find quite a large community of “non-aligned” people not normally part of the Parish’s regular activities exists and felt strongly that the Church was worth saving.”

### What was your sales pitch?

“The importance of Bedrule Church as a community space, a place of spiritual renewal (i.e a church), an architectural focus in the landscape of Rulewater Valley, and a building of importance culturally, historically, and to a large diaspora interested in genealogy was described. Our commitment to ensuring that these

roles will continue was emphasised. The dangers of seeing the building sold as a house, to a business, or left empty and unused potentially to decay through neglect were highlighted.

“The rapid move to set up our charity was fundamental to conveying values of professionalism, good governance and community service and thus indicating that donations would be well used for the intended purpose.

“Transparency about the purchase cost of the building, the ongoing need to fund baseline activities annually and the necessity for additional fundraising for modernisation and repurposing gave potential donors confidence that the plans for the future of the building were being developed, and thus that purchasing the building was viable.

“Community involvement was very important in giving potential donors a feeling of being included in decision making. Engagement with the Turnbull Clan, local community meetings, personal consultation and publicity assisted in this.”

### **How long did the campaign run for?**

Bedrule Church Future’s crowdfunding campaign went live on platform Givey on the 7th of July 2025 and was ongoing at the date of publication. However, donations were being received before this, from when the group first opened its bank account, as it had lined up donors prior to this.

### **How did you link it to other sources of information, e.g. website / social media pages?**

“We promoted the project through:

- an article on the BBC website
- an interview with ITV Borders which was broadcast and then available on YouTube
- articles in the local press (Hawick Paper, Explore the Borders)
- Turnbull Clan Newspaper “The Bullseye”
- posts on local Facebook groups
- a campaign website for Bedrule Church
- drone footage courtesy of The Turnbull Clan
- two interviews on local radio
- posters displayed in our local area
- a crowdfunding page linked via our website.”

## Was there anything unique about your campaign?

Bedrule Church has strong connections to the Turnbull Clan. For support acquiring the building, Bedrule Church Future turned to the Turnbull Clan Association, a non-profit organisation based in North Carolina who seek to promote and preserve the cultural heritage associated with the Turnbull Clan.

“We contacted them (Turnbull Clan Association) in the spring of 2025 and they embraced our cause enthusiastically. In the end, they raised around half of the initial funds we needed.”

“The Turnbull Clan, historically, installed a window in the church, depicting the close connection of emigrants to America and the Rulewater Valley and the Church. The church also has a memorial to Archbishop William Turnbull, founder of Glasgow University in 1451.”

## How much did you hope to raise?

“Our primary target was £50,000. This consisted of the church valuation (£30,000), acquisition costs (£5,000), including solicitors fees and local authority legal costs for new church owner rights of access across churchyard, and the first year’s running costs (£15,000).”

## How much did you actually raise?

Through supporters who used Givey, Bedrule Church Future raised £1,760.00 from 11 donations, at the time of publication.

A total of £17,421.09 was raised through donations from the Turnbull Clan Association.

Through other supporters’ (local, Scottish Borders, Scotland and the rest of the UK) direct donations, via BACS, cheque or cash, a further £43,948.00 was raised.

Therefore, the group raised £63,129.09 in total which was over £13,000 above their original target.

## Did you have any other sources of income, e.g. grant funding?

No grant funding was used to purchase the building.

## What was the outcome?

“We were successful in raising at least the purchase price (market valuation) and acquisition costs (£35,000) by the end of July 2025 deadline given by the Church of Scotland. We are able to fund the purchase of the church and we are in the conveyancing process (November 2025). We have also raised funds to cover the first year’s baseline costs, moving in costs and initial project planning.”

### What lessons were learned during the crowdfunding process?

Bedrule Church Future learned to be flexible in their decision making. Despite being eligible for various grant funding, due to the short timescales the group was working under and the lack of alignment between the timescale provided by the seller and the timescales of grant funders, the group was unable to pursue grant funding and had to raise the necessary monies through private donations.

The group also noted the importance of credibility and maintaining a professionalism throughout the process. It did this by giving the CoS frequent progress reports regarding getting charitable and SCIO status and fundraising. This ensured the Church granted Bedrule Church Future a period of exclusivity and recognised that the group was making progress towards the goal of purchasing the building.

Finally, the campaign to bring Bedrule Church into community ownership led Bedrule Church Future to find a “reservoir of community loyalty” to the church building which the “church-going parish community was not engaging with”.

“This group (120 plus donors and more non-financial supporters) stepped up with significant funds to prevent Bedrule church being sold to a developer, closed to the community. We suspect that this community would not have engaged so effectively had an individual donor, or the SLF, funded the purchase. Community engagement is essential for the long term.”