



Development
Trusts Association
Scotland

A Thriving Community-led Network

New Futures: Former Places of Worship

Workshop 2 – Series 3

Involving your community



The 'New Futures: Former Places of Worship' programme

- The New Futures programme is part of the **Community Ownership Support Service (COSS)**, which is part of the **Development Trusts Association for Scotland (DTAS)**
- Programme began in January 2025, funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic Environment Scotland and Development Trusts Association Scotland
- To provide enhanced support to community groups considering taking on former places of worship across Scotland. In direct response to the **significant and unprecedented number of former places of worship** that are **due to for disposal over the next several years**
- We have supported over **100 communities to date**, and we continue to **receive new enquiries** from communities interested in bringing a church building into community ownership.



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA



Development
Trusts Association
Scotland

A Thriving Community-led Network



How we work

Advice & Support



Training & Resources



Networking & Events



Representation & Influencing



All staff contact details are on our website: <https://dtascot.org.uk/our-team/>



The New Futures team



**Churches Advisor -
North Scotland**

Audrey Dunn
audrey@dtascot.org.uk
07956 730149



**Churches Advisor -
South and Central Scotland**

Harry Whitmore -
Harry.whitmore@dtascot.org.uk
07903 060475



**Churches Advisor -
South and Central Scotland**

Claire Martin
claire.martin@dtascot.org.uk
07903 059822



Churches Programme Officer

Addie Maher
Addie.maher@dtascot.org.uk

All staff contact details are on our website: <https://dtascot.org.uk/our-team/>



New Futures Workshops – Series 3

- ~~First Steps to Community Ownership – 06/10/26, 13:00-14:30~~
 - Involving Your Community – 20/10/26 12:00-13:30
 - Finance and Fundraising 1: Mainstream Funders – 27/10/26 11:00-13:00
 - Finance and Fundraising 2: Alternative Funding Methods – 05/11/26 13:00-14:30
 - Continuing to Operate as a Place of Worship – 17/11/26 12:00-13:30
 - Your Building: A Guide – 26/11/26, 11:00-12:30
- Core COSS workshop – Introduction to Community Right to Buy in Scotland - 17/12/26 10:00

The following workshops will be held in early 2027, dates to be confirmed:

- **Business Planning**
- **Financial Planning**
- **Community Right to Buy**
- **Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation**

For questions and enquiries, please email Addie Maher, Churches Programme Officer at:
addie.maher@dtascot.org.uk



Today's workshop: Involving Your Community

Presentation from Harry Whitmore, Churches Advisor

Plenty of time for questions during the Q&A at the end.

Housekeeping:

- Please keep yourselves on mute, to avoid background noise
- Feel free to introduce yourselves in the chat; and if possible, put your name and church building in your Zoom profile
- Please also put any questions in the chat
- This session will be recorded and uploaded to our website – keep your camera off if you don't want to be in the recording

Follow up:

- We will send the slides out by email after the event, along with a feedback form
- Get in touch! With us – and each other (via us if you'd prefer)

We will now begin recording.



Today's workshop: Involving Your Community

I'll be speaking for about 45 minutes to cover the core principles:

- Where to begin
- What is community engagement?
- Why involve your community?
- What do we mean by 'your community'?
- How can you involve your community?
- Practical tips & techniques
- What does successful community engagement look like?

Different community engagement strategies for Church communities

- Traditional engagement events
- Heritage engagement

Q&A



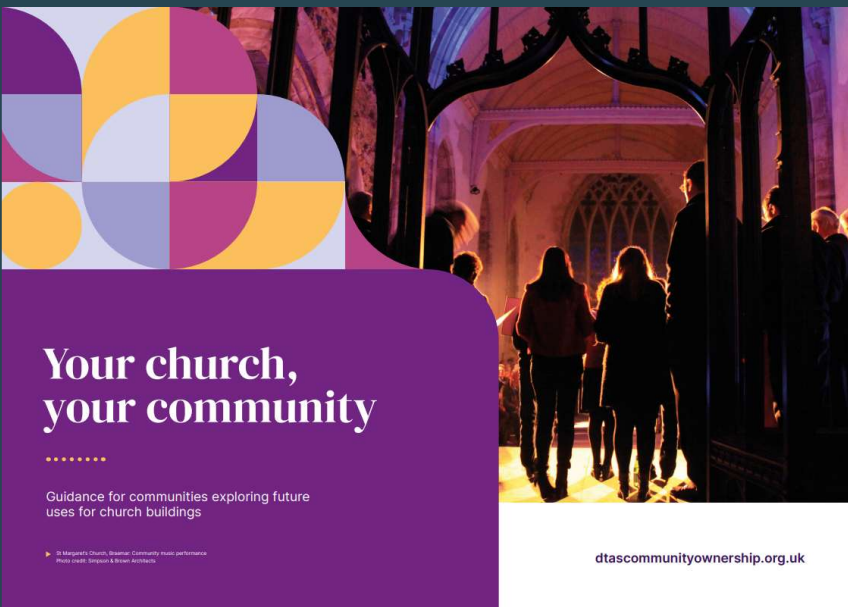
Where to begin



Where do we start?

These questions are relevant because you are all community organisations! You will have 'communities' that you represent, and they will need to be involved in your project.

We're going to be using the terms 'involving your community' and 'community engagement' fairly interchangeably throughout this workshop.



You can find introductory information in '[Your Church Your Community](#)'. The Community Ownership Support Service have a detailed resource '[Involving Your Community](#)'.





Community
Ownership
Support Service

Development Trusts Association Scotland



Heritage
Trust
Network



HISTORIC
CHURCHES
SCOTLAND
GABLAISIAN
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA



Your church, your community

Guidance for communities exploring future
uses for church buildings

► St Margaret's Church, Glasgow: Community music performance
Photo credit: Simpson & Brown Architects

dtascor

3.3 Engage with your community

Engaging with your community to gather their views should be a key part of your plans and one of the first things you should do to ensure there is support as well as to gather people's views.

Community engagement is not something you do once, more of a continuous process as your project develops.

It can seem daunting if you haven't done it before, but it is essential to ensure that the decisions you make will benefit the area. The degree of involvement and exactly how to involve people has to be matched to your community, as well as the needs and status of your project.

It has a number of key benefits:

- Ensuring that the project reflects local needs, has local support and does not have any adverse unintended consequences
- Providing new ideas and different perspectives
- Identifying new partners and collaborators
- Finding people who can bring new skills, knowledge and experience to the project
- Giving your community, public bodies, funders and other organisations confidence that your project is rooted in community needs and has community support

It's important to be clear why, when and how you are going to involve people. Clarify why you are involving people at each stage of your project and explain how you are going to do it. You should be clear with the community about the scale of the challenge and the amount of work that will be required. It's important to manage expectations and be realistic about what is achievable.

Have a look at the COSS publication '**Involving Your Community**' for further ideas on local engagement

Types of community engagement

Informing people

Is the starting point
and will be important
throughout the project

Consulting people

Should take place
when there are
options to define or
decisions to be taken

Engaging people

Should take place when
there is clear support
and commitment for
your project and where
people want to get
closely involved



INVOLVING YOUR COMMUNITY

A practical guide to the benefits and techniques for involving and consulting local communities in community asset based projects.

www.dtascommunityownership.org.uk

Contents

Page

2	Introduction
3	Why involving your community will help
4	Planning community involvement
6	Informing
7	Consulting
8	Engaging
9	How to get more advice and support
12	Appendix 1 - Informing – To provide people with information to assist their understanding
16	Appendix 2 - Consulting – To obtain feedback on specific policies and proposals
21	Appendix 3 - Engaging – Additional techniques to encourage greater engagement
22	Appendix 4 – Planning template for community consultation
23	Appendix 5 - Resources

Delivered by The Development Trusts Association Scotland, the Community Ownership Support Service is funded by the Scottish Government to support the sustainable transfer of public assets into community ownership. This advisor-led service provides advice and information on all aspects of asset transfer on a Scotland-wide basis.

Introduction

This guide is intended for community organisations and other groups who are planning to undertake a community asset project. It will also be a useful tool on how to gather information and build relationships with their community for any project they undertake or issue they may have.

Involving your community in developing and managing your community asset project should be a key part of your plans. It can seem daunting if you haven't done it before and the benefits may initially be unclear.

This guide:

- Explains why community involvement is key to the development and ultimate success of your project.
- Suggests how and when to involve your community.
- Provides links to other sources of more detailed advice and information.

Its key messages are:

- Effective community involvement is vital to ensure your project is a success.
- Involvement can range from informing and consultation to active engagement in taking decisions and implementing the project.
- The degree of involvement and exactly how to involve people has to be matched to your community, as well as the needs and status of your project.
- Community involvement should be planned from the start of the project and be a continuing part of the work.
- There are a range of approaches you can use and it is normally best to use a combination of them during the lifetime of a project.
- There are many sources of advice and support. A good place to start is to identify another project which has been successful in involving a local community.

Why involving your community will help

Involving your community in your project from the outset and at every stage will bring benefit for your project, your organisation and your community.

These can be summarised as:

For your project

- Ensuring that the project reflects local needs, has local support and does not have any adverse unintended consequences.
- Providing new ideas and different perspectives.
- Identifying new partners and collaborators.
- Finding people who can bring new skills, knowledge and experience to the project.

For your organisation

- Demonstrating your accountability to the community.
- Creating links with the community and ambassadors for the project and your organisation.
- Identifying and building new support, skills and experience that your organisation can potentially use for other projects and work in the future.

For your local community

- Strengthening local pride, sense of community and quality of life.
- Linking people together so that the social capital** of the community is increased and people feel empowered to take action on your project and other issues which are important to them.
- Encouraging volunteering.

These are all powerful benefits of effective community involvement. They help ensure that your project is the best it can be and progresses as quickly and easily as possible. They can also build foundations for future projects by empowering and energising your community to tackle other issues.

For individuals

- Seeing their views and ideas listened to and acted on, and so developing a personal interest in your project.
- Providing an opportunity for volunteers to use their existing skills and experience in order to develop new ones.
- Feeling part of their community and meeting people.
- Gaining confidence.

For your stakeholders

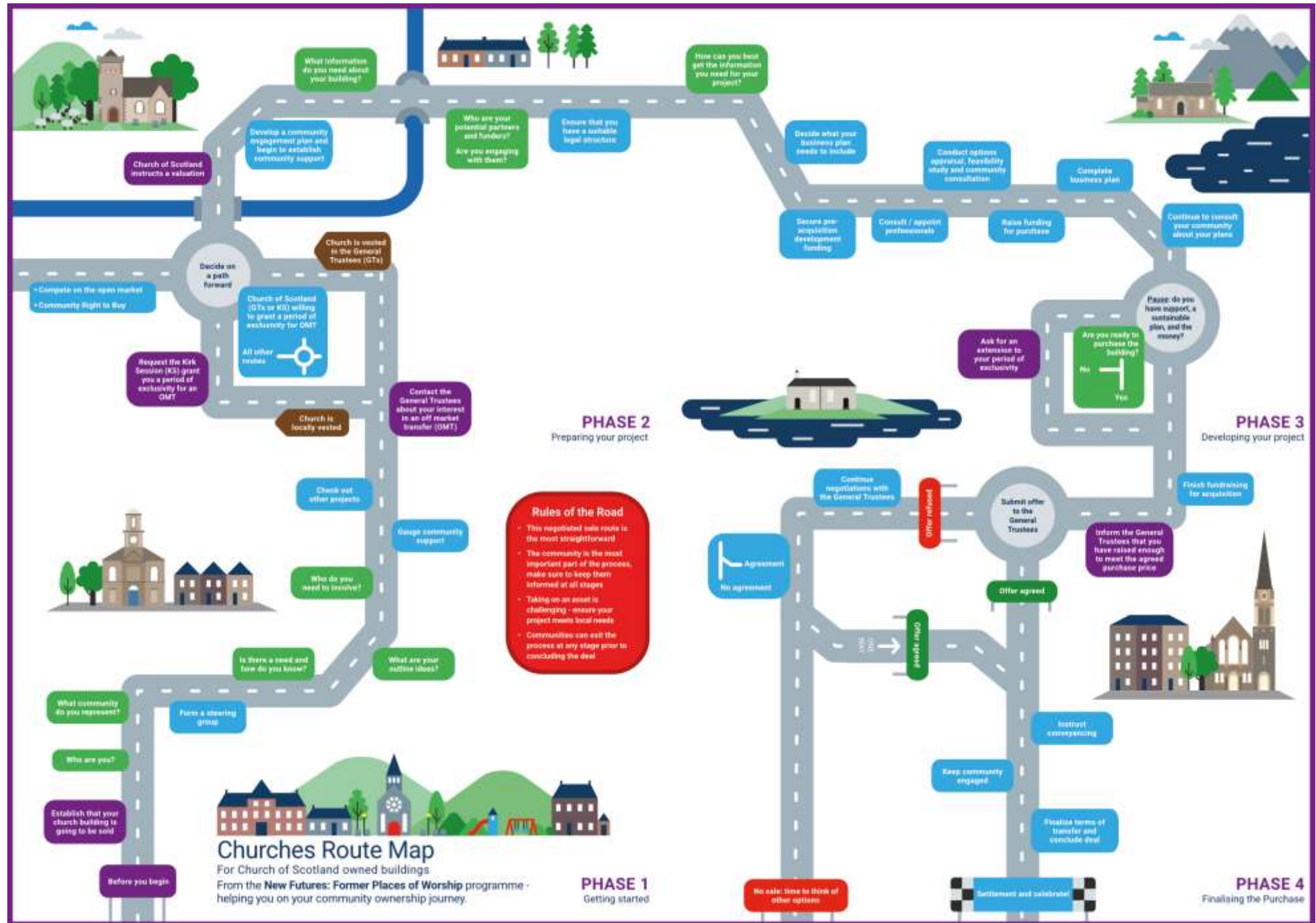
- Giving your community, local authorities and public bodies, funders and other organisations confidence that your project is rooted in community needs and has community support.
- Demonstrating the capacity of your organisation to involve and enthuse your community.

**social capital can be described as the level of trusting relationships that exist which allows people to support one another. The higher the level of social capital you have within your community (whether geographical or thematic) the stronger and more resilient your community is likely to be.

The effectiveness of community involvement depends on:

- Planning it from the outset as an integral part of your project.
- Being inclusive.
- Matching the type of community involvement to the stage of your project and the nature of your community.

Negotiated sale route map 10





PHASE 2 - Preparing your project

Contact the General Trustees about your interest in an off market transfer (OMT)

Once you have worked out your initial ideas and formed a steering group, contact the General Trustees. The property is owned by the Church of Scotland, at the following address: general.trustees@churchofscotland.org.uk to express an interest in an off market transfer. This process is outlined in the Church of Scotland's Off Market Transfer Guidelines, which is available on the Church of Scotland's website.

The General Trustees will inform you whether your church building is included in the General Trustees, or locally in the Trusts of the Kirk Session.

Church is listed in the General Trustees

The majority of Church of Scotland buildings are listed in the General Trustees. This means that the building is owned centrally by the property owning arm of the Church of Scotland. They will inform you whether they are willing to offer your group a period of exclusivity.

Church is locally listed

A minority of Church of Scotland buildings are owned locally. This means that the building is owned by the Trustees of the local Kirk Session.

In such circumstances, the Church of Scotland states in their Guidance that it is for the Local Trustees to decide how the building is sold and the General Trustees will not normally play a major role.

Request the Kirk Session to grant a period of exclusivity for an OMT

When a building is owned by the Trustees of the Kirk Session, then you must persuade them, rather than the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland, to offer your group a period of exclusivity. This can often be an advantage as it is more direct, depending on the attitude of the Kirk Session to your project.

Try engaging with the Kirk Session as soon as possible, being transparent and collaborative in your approach to finding a new use for the building, to increase the likelihood that the Kirk Session is supportive of your project.

General Trustees willing to grant a period of exclusivity

Church is on same market

General Trustees cannot grant a period of exclusivity

Developing community engagement plan and begin to establish community support

Get the details of your period of exclusivity in writing from either the General Trustees or the Kirk Session. This process is outlined in the Church of Scotland's Off Market Transfer Guidelines, which is available on the Church of Scotland's website.

If you are looking to have the first option to purchase the asset, then you must be able to separate the sale from the building. See the Community Right to Buy House Map, available on the GOV website, or speak to your Churches' Adviser for more information. Otherwise, you will have to compete on the open market to purchase the building.

The General Trustees cannot grant a period of exclusivity for the building. The extent to which they will be able to share the details of the building depends on who has been listed on the asset. Sometimes they will be willing to share the entire valuation, the front page of the valuation, or the value may require a fee for the valuation to be shared.

Community support is essential throughout your project. You should begin your community engagement in earnest once you have your period of exclusivity secured. It is best to make an engagement plan as you are approached about how you will do this throughout your project.

Read Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS)'s comprehensive community engagement resource, involving your Community, or speak to your Churches' Adviser for more information.

The New Futures programme also hosts a working on involving the Community as part of your rolling series of workshops.

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) have a useful Talking About Heritage resource, available on their website.

What information do you need about your building?

Who are your potential funders?

Are you engaging with them?

Present that you have a viable legal structure

Consider all the work that needs to be done to make a case to the community, the General Trustees, and the Kirk Session. This will set out all the details about the organisation, the asset, the local community context, what activities will take place in the building, who your partners are, and how it will all be paid for.

How you know the information you need to gather, identify the funding you need to take the project to the next phase, and contact the relevant funders at an early stage.

Connect with appropriate organisations and funders to establish what support you will be able to access following acquisition.

It is also likely that you will need to raise funding yourselves locally through a range of different approaches, such as a crowdfunding campaign.

The New Futures programme has resources and templates for grant funding, and crowdfunding, and a business and financial planning available on our website.

How that you have an idea of what you are planning to do with the building and what business case you are looking to set up, it is time to either check that your current legal structure is appropriate, or set up a new legal entity to allow you to deliver on your ideas.

Your legal structure and appropriate governance documents are important - they set out your obligations and liabilities to members, as well as to the community. Certain funding programmes may have strict eligibility criteria - make sure your governing document fits with these.

The New Futures programme has a guidance note on the various legal structures you can use.

PHASE 3 - Developing your project

How can you best get the information you need for your project?

Decide what your business plan needs to include

Secure pre-acquisition investment funding

To be confident that you can deliver your project, you will need a full business plan and a detailed budget. This will set out all the details about the organisation, the asset, the local community context, what activities will take place in the building, who your partners are, and how it will all be paid for.

It is an essential document to give confidence to any who have a stake in the project, or who might need to contribute external support.

You might have the skills and experience within your organisation to do all of this yourselves, or you might need to commission external support.

Decide what you can do yourselves, and what support you can get for free. Carry out a skills audit so that you know what skills and experience you have within your organisation and local community.

Find out what free support is available from other agencies such as your local Third Sector Interface, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, South of Scotland Enterprise, Business Gateway, Social Enterprise, Scotland, and Academies.

Following this, you will know what external support you will need to buy in.

At all stages, the organisation needs to retain control over the evolution of the business plan, so that you are confident that you can deliver it.

Once you know what external professional support you need to buy in, you will need to secure the funding for this. This may be from your own fundraising efforts. If you are applying for grant funding, most grant funders will require a minimum number of comparable projects.

Complete business plan

Offer refused

Offer agreed

Agreement

No agreement

No sale, time to re-evaluate options

Your project will need professional input, typically from architects, surveyors and other specialist services.

You might need to contract with a consultant to carry out some of the work, as a detailed brief and open tendering process will be required.

It is best practice to have a well-designed brief before you appoint professionals, and you will also require a commercial agreement with your chosen consultants.

Some of this work may be carried out by a consultant that you have contracted with, or by yourselves. If you have the appropriate skills, time and resources available, it is important to consider all the options available to you both in terms of addressing the needs you have identified, and the impact of the cost of the project on any funding you have secured. Don't forget that the option to 'do nothing' should always be considered.

Capital funding is for any fixed costs such as purchase of the asset, construction or refurbishment. Development funding may be needed for additional costs. You may need further technical advice to make sure your project is sustainable. And you may need to employ or contract with an individual or company to manage the post-acquisition capital development phase.

Once you have identified your preferred approach, initiative costs and how they will be funded, you need to complete a business plan to demonstrate the viability of your project. The plan should also include (among other things) financial projections, a market appraisal and a business case for the project. Your business plan will help you set out the case for funding and finance for the project.

Can you do this yourself?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

Can you do this with your community?

It is important to consult your community about your plans as they develop, going from the chance to collaborate, feedback and support.

You can do this by holding one or more public meetings, which are available to attend (open or online). Ensure that any event is well publicised and open to everyone. It is important to make sure people feel comfortable to provide feedback and that you take people's comments and suggestions on board.

How and think about whether you have everything you need to purchase the asset, and run it effectively.

Have you raised enough money to meet the valuation, and all any other funding you may need, such as legal fees and running costs? Do you have a comprehensive and sustainable plan about how you will run the asset, and does your community support the plan?

Now that you have assessed how things stand at this point in time, are you prepared to take on the asset?

If you are ready, then proceed to making an offer.

If you are not ready, then ask for an extension to your period of exclusivity.

In the Church of Scotland's Off Market Transfer Guidelines is the provision that they may be willing to extend a period of exclusivity. The guidance states that this decision will be based on the following:

- The building is still being used.
- The Kirk Session continues to support the transfer.
- A contributed body has been set up to take ownership of the building (e.g. SCDS).
- The group can show clear progress in fundraising.

PHASE 1 - Getting started

Before you begin

The process of bringing a church building into community ownership can be challenging and complex, but the New Futures programme has resources which will help you get started.

Your Church, Your Community will give you a good overview of what you will need to consider at the outset if you are thinking about taking a church into community ownership.

You can find this, and other resources, online on our website.

Establish that your church building is going to be sold

The Church of Scotland's Off Market Transfer Guidelines explains how the Church of Scotland will sell its assets to community organisations.

To find out whether the building you are interested in will be sold by the Church of Scotland, the New Futures programme keeps a record of which buildings have been earmarked for disposal.

For the most up-to-date information about whether a building has already been identified for disposal, please contact either your local Pastors' Office or the General Trustees (GTs) at: general.trustees@churchofscotland.org.uk

Who are you?

Are you an individual or group of people who want to help organise others in your community to bring a church building into community ownership? Are you a member of the congregation who wants to see the building be used only for the future?

What community do you represent?

Form a steering group

What are your aims and how do you know?

What are your aims and how do you know?

Define your community and be inclusive. Are you a geographic community or a community brought together by shared interest? It is important to ensure that your community covers (this will later be defined formally in your organisation's constitution).

Take note of potential future requirements from funders, or the legislation such as Community Right to Buy at this stage.

What you are exploring options, you may want to set up a steering group. This will give you a group of people who will create a formal entity to engage with the Church of Scotland.

The New Futures programme has a template for a steering group looking at church buildings, available on our website.

Many groups form in response to a church being sold, but it is important to ensure that your group meets a need within the community. If not, the project is unlikely to be sustainable in the long term.

What opportunities will emerging the asset bring to your community? What are the needs of your community more widely? Be careful not to create wish lists - this is about being able to demonstrate a clear need.

You may be looking to take on a church building for any one of a number of reasons. Get your ideas down on paper so that you can relay them to others, gather support and research new ideas.

The New Futures programme has helpful guidance notes on our website which includes information on some of the most popular uses for church buildings.

Who do you need to involve?

Check on other projects

Check on other projects

Check on other projects

Look at the people currently involved in your project. Think about carrying out a skills audit. This helps to identify with you, allowing you to encourage others with the additional skills you need to get involved and help.

You might consider involving:

- Local community organisations
- Local businesses
- People with a connection to the church building

Check buildings already have a distinct community associated with them. Consider contacting the congregation and Kirk Session for support.

The New Futures programme has a template for a steering group looking at church buildings, available on our website.

According to the Church of Scotland's guidance, the GTs will usually only consider an off-market transfer if both the Kirk Session and the Presbytery are supportive. So it is important that they are consulted at an early stage.

See if your community supports your ideas in principle. Through a simple survey in community meeting, early stage engagement will help you decide whether to proceed, and will support your request for a period of exclusivity.

Identify similar projects that have gone through the process and speak to them about their experiences. This is extremely important as they can give you a 'heads and tails' approach and their experiences with funders, consultants and others. You may be able to access funding to help with this.

The New Futures programme website lists a variety of examples and case studies of previous projects. You can also speak to your Churches' Adviser who will be able to direct you to relevant contacts.

PHASE 4 - Finalising purchase

Finalise funding

Inform the General Trustees that you have raised enough to meet the valuation

Submit offer to the General Trustees

Now that you have support for the project, a detailed and sustainable business plan, and you have raised the money you need, it is time to prepare to purchase the building. Call in any outstanding pledges, make sure you have received the grants from any funders you have been given, and close your crowdfunding campaign.

Let the General Trustees know that the money has been raised and that you will submit a formal offer to purchase the asset.

Your offer will need to be submitted by your solicitor. You can find a list of solicitors on the Law Society of Scotland website. You will be contacting the solicitor as Trustees of the Church of Scotland.

The offer should be submitted to the Church of Scotland Law Department, 121 George Street, Edinburgh, EH2 4PL, EH1 2AD 2253, properties@churchofscotland.org.uk

If the offer is not accepted for any reason, identify the problem and engage with the General Trustees immediately to try and find a solution that is suitable for both parties.

If negotiations are successful and a solution is found, then proceed to the offer agreed pathway.

If they are not, continue in the offer refused pathway.

If you have been unable to agree a deal to purchase the land or building, it is time to regroup and consider your options. This might include taking another route to ownership, or finding alternative sites, or other ways in which you can deliver your project.

Offer refused

Offer agreed

Agreement

No agreement

No sale, time to re-evaluate options

No sale, time to re-evaluate options

No sale, time to re-evaluate options

No sale, time to re-evaluate options

No sale, time to re-evaluate options

No sale, time to re-evaluate options

No sale, time to re-evaluate options

If you have been granted a period of exclusivity, and are able to meet the Church of Scotland's valuation, then the offer is likely to be accepted.

If the offer is not accepted for any reason, identify the problem and engage with the General Trustees immediately to try and find a solution that is suitable for both parties.

If negotiations are successful and a solution is found, then proceed to the offer agreed pathway.

If they are not, continue in the offer refused pathway.

If you have been unable to agree a deal to purchase the land or building, it is time to regroup and consider your options. This might include taking another route to ownership, or finding alternative sites, or other ways in which you can deliver your project.

Offer refused

Offer agreed

Agreement

No agreement

No sale, time to re-evaluate options

No sale, time to re-evaluate options

No sale, time to re-evaluate options

No sale, time to re-evaluate options

No sale, time to re-evaluate options

No sale, time to re-evaluate options

No sale, time to re-evaluate options

Conveyancing is the legal process of transferring title (ownership) of a property from a seller to a buyer. It is important to check the terms and conditions of the sale thoroughly to ensure you will be able to carry out your plans. In particular, make sure that access rights are agreed, and that a comprehensive inventory of contents is included on the sale. Know what you are acquiring by way of fixtures and fittings. Your solicitor will be able to advise you.

See the Church of Scotland's Off Market Transfer Guidelines, and the deposit of recorded documents guidance document for more information.

As with every step in the process, ensure the community is kept informed of your plans. It is especially important to be transparent and communicative in the period before the asset comes into community ownership.

Do a final check of the terms and conditions of the sale. If you have any concerns, take legal advice. Once you are satisfied, conclude the sale with the General Trustees.

You may wish to hold a public event to celebrate the official community ownership of the church building. You may also wish to issue a press release or speak to a journalist in advance about the story. Live on the air the opportunity to get involved and make sure you take lots of photographs. If it's been a long time since the last time you've been there, it's only the very start of your journey.



Follow the QR code to the New Futures programme website



The Community Ownership Support Service (COSS) is a Scotland-wide service which provides advice and support for communities interested in bringing assets into community ownership. It is part of Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS), a member and network of Development Trusts in Scotland. Contact: T: 0131 225 2080 E: info@cooss.org.uk www.coosscommunityownership.org.uk



The Scottish Government promotes the various rights to buy under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. Contact: E: info@scottish.gov.uk T: 0800 344 6652

The Community Land Fund is the Scottish Government's fund to support community organisations in bringing forward ideas for community ownership. It is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and Development Trust Association Scotland (DTAS).



**What is community engagement,
and why do we do it?**





What is community engagement?

- Community engagement, is a means to achieve **inclusive, reciprocal, and transparent decision-making for your project and your organisation**.
- It's about connecting with your community: **communicating information, consulting, and collaborating** with your **members and the wider community throughout the life of your project and beyond**.
- Done right, this can ultimately lead to 'community empowerment'. **When the community you represent is fully included**, participates in the processes of your organisation, and can **enact its priorities through your organisation**.



Why involve your community?

There are short-term, medium-term, and long-term reasons why you should involve your community:

- **Short term (task impact):** more, stronger ideas; evidence for funding applications; opportunities to attract volunteers.
- **Medium term (project impact):** local buy-in for your project; a project which meets a wider set of needs across your community; a project which connects to other local agendas.
- **Long term (organisational impact):** strengthens governance; builds institutional support for your organisation and/or project; a good reputation in your community; succession planning and reduced risk of crisis.



Why involve your community?



Left unchecked, poor community engagement can be a key contributor to organisational crisis



Planning community involvement

Effective community involvement is vital to ensure your project is a success.

You will need to plan for community involvement from the **outset of your project**.

This means **identifying the key stages of the project** (project inception, business planning, fundraising) and deciding what type and action of community involvement is most suitable at each stage.

For example:

- How are you going to let people know that you want to bring your local church into community ownership?
- How will you decide how best to use the building?
- How will you raise the money to buy it?

Community engagement is essential to getting to the answer to each of these questions.

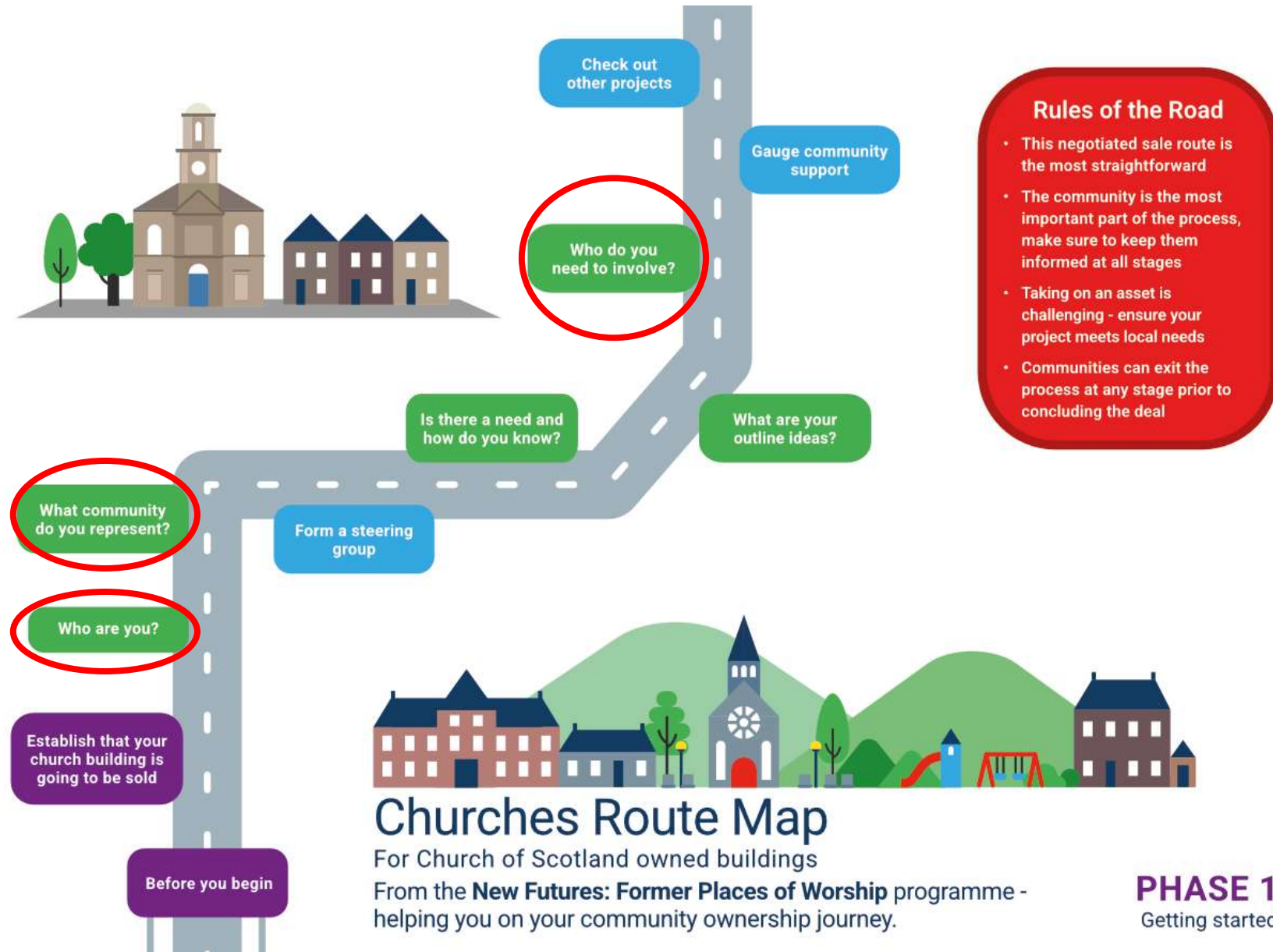
The first step to achieving this is defining and understanding your community...



What do we mean by ‘your community’?



What do we mean by 'your community'?



PHASE 1
Getting started



What do we mean by 'your community'?

Who are you?

Are you an individual or group of people who want to help organise others in your community to bring a church building into community ownership? Are you a member of the congregation who wants to see the building be used into the future?

What community do you represent?

Define your community and be inclusive. Are you a geographic community or a community brought together by shared interest? Be clear from the beginning what area your community covers (this will later be defined formally in your organisation's constitution).

Take note of potential future requirements from funders, or the legislation such as Community Right to Buy at this stage.

Who do you need to involve?

Look at the people currently involved in your project. Think about carrying out a skills audit; this helps to identify skills gaps, allowing you to encourage others with the additional skills you need to get involved and help.

You might consider involving:

- local community organisations
- local businesses
- people with a connection to the church building

Church buildings already have a distinct community associated with them. Consider contacting the congregation and Kirk Session for support.

According to the Church of Scotland's guidance, 'The GTs will usually only consider an off market transfer if both the Kirk Session and the Presbytery are supportive.' So it is important that they are consulted at an early stage.



What do we mean by 'your community'?

Typically, we say there are two types of community: a 'community of interest' and a 'community of geography'. As community organisations, your community will be defined within your governing documents:

Membership is open to any individual aged 16 or over who is in support of the organisation's objectives to purchase, maintain and preserve Lyne Kirk for the cultural, heritage and spiritual benefit of present and future generations.

The company has been formed to benefit the community of Stow and Fountainhall which comprises the Parish of Stow Community Council Area ("the Community") with the following objects:

There are advantages and disadvantages associated with each approach. But essentially, as democratic community organisations, your 'community' is the group of people you're acting in the interest of, and who you'll be accountable to!

For the Purposes of Jock's Lodge Community Trust, the boundary of Piershill and Willowbrae are defined by the following postcodes:

EH7 6LD, EH8 7AA, EH8 7AB, EH8 7AD, EH8 7AE, EH8 7AF, EH8 7AG, EH8 7AH, EH8 7AJ, EH8 7AL, EH8 7AN, EH8 7AP, EH8 7AQ, EH8 7AR, EH8 7AS, EH8 7AW, EH8 7AY, EH8 7AZ, EH8 7BA, EH8 7BB, EH8 7BD, EH8 7BE, EH8 7BG, EH8 7BJ, EH8 7BL, EH8 7BN, EH8 7BP, EH8 7BQ, EH8 7BR, EH8 7BS, EH8 7BT, EH8 7BU, EH8 7BW, EH8 7BX, EH8 7BY, EH8 7DB, EH8 7DD, EH8 7DE, EH8 7DF, EH8 7DG, EH8 7DH, EH8 7DJ, EH8 7DL, EH8 7DN, EH8 7DP, EH8 7DQ, EH8 7DR, EH8 7DS, EH8 7DT, EH8 7DU, EH8 7DW, EH8 7DX, EH8 7DY, EH8 7DZ, EH8 7EA, EH8 7EB, EH8 7ED, EH8 7EE, EH8 7EF, EH8 7EH, EH8 7EJ, EH8 7EL, EH8 7EN, EH8 7EP, EH8 7ER, EH8 7ES, EH8 7ET, EH8 7EU, EH8 7EW, EH8 7EY, EH8 7EZ, EH8 7HA, EH8 7HB, EH8 7HD, EH8 7HE, EH8 7HF, EH8 7HG, EH8 7HL, EH8 7HN, EH8 7HP, EH8 7HQ, EH8 7HR, EH8 7HS, EH8 7HT, EH8 7HU, EH8 7HW, EH8 7HX, EH8 7HY, EH8 7HZ, EH8 7JA, EH8 7JD, EH8 7JE, EH8 7JF, EH8 7JG, EH8 7JH, EH8 7JJ, EH8 7JL, EH8 7JN, EH8 7JP, EH8 7JQ, EH8 7JR, EH8 7JS, EH8 7JU, EH8 7JW, EH8 7JY, EH8 7LA, EH8 7LB, EH8 7LD, EH8 7RU



What do we mean by 'your community'?

Your community means **a lot more than a set of postcodes.**

- Who lives in your geographic area or who belongs to your community of interest?
- Who are your wider users of your building? Either current or planned.
- Who is part of your community, but may face barriers to getting involved? How can you overcome those barriers?

Community can be further afield. Church buildings often have connections to a wider interest group – they can be included as associate members if you're a community of geography.

Most of the time, church buildings will have had a pre-existing community – **the Congregation and Kirk Session.** Have you made contact?



The church community

Most of the time, church buildings will have had a pre-existing community – the Congregation. It is often essential to get the support of the Kirk Session specifically, if your project is going to progress.

Mechanics of Sale

Who Decides How a Building is Sold?

Most church and hall buildings are owned by the General Trustees. In these cases, it is the General Trustees who decide how and to whom a building is sold, though they will always consult with the local Kirk Session. The GTs will usually only consider an OMT if both the Kirk Session and the Presbytery are supportive.

In some situations, a building may be owned by Local Trustees. Where this is the case, it is for the Local Trustees to decide how the building is sold and the General Trustees will not normally play a major role. Local Trustees must make sure that their legal (fiduciary) responsibilities are met during any transfer.

Extract from General Trustees' 'Off-Market Transfer Guidance' – Published September 2025

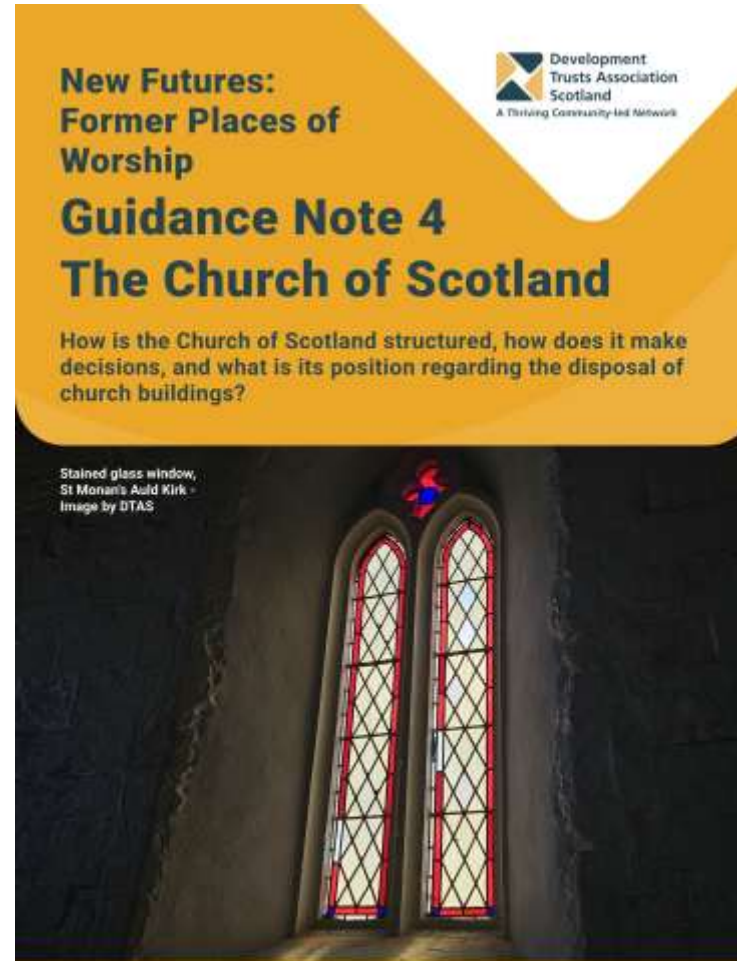
Warning! Beware of a conflict of interest here. Many community groups looking at church buildings have members of the local church involved. If a member of the Kirk Session sits on the board of your community org, this could be a conflict of interest.



The Church community

We have information about the Church of Scotland, and how it works, in our upcoming Guidance Notes.

Watch this space!



Stained glass window,
St Monan's Auld Kirk -
Image by DTAS

Published 01/09/2025



How does the Church of Scotland work?

The Church of Scotland (CoS) is considered Scotland's national Church. While the Presbyterian Church has roots in the 1500s, its status as the national Church in Scotland is guaranteed under the Act of Union of Scotland and England of 1707.

Despite being a national Church, it is independent of the state. Therefore, the Church must be able to sustain itself financially. To ensure its sustainability into the future, the Church has decided to rationalise its estate, putting approximately 800 church buildings at risk of disposal between 2022 and 2027, among other kinds of property.

What is the organisational structure of the Church of Scotland?

The Church of Scotland is theologically and administratively decentralised compared with other Christian Churches. At its most grass-roots level, the Church of Scotland is made up of congregations. Matters at the congregational level are led and

administered by the Kirk Session, which is made up of Church Elders and the Minister.

At a regional level, the Church is divided into 11 Scottish Presbyteries. These have responsibility for developing and implementing Presbytery Mission Plans, which determine the future of how the Church implements its mission, and crucially, which buildings will be necessary for the fulfilment of that mission, and which are surplus to requirement.

There is no head of the Church of Scotland. The Assembly Trustees act as Charity Trustees of the unincorporated Charity that is the Church of Scotland, and the Moderator of the General Assembly leads the General Assembly, an annual meeting in which matters of political and theological importance are discussed and decided.

The General Assembly is an annual meeting, led by the Moderator, to decide matters of administrative, political and theological importance.

The General Assembly

The General Trustees

The General Trustees are the property-owning arm of the CoS, set up in 1921 by an act of Parliament. For more information about the General Trustees and how they operate, see page 3.

The Presbytery

Following mergers, there are now eleven Presbyteries in Scotland. They have been tasked with organising the merger of congregations and the disposals of buildings as part of the presbytery planning process.

The Kirk Session

The Kirk Session is made up of Church Elders and the Minister. They should be your first point of contact to understand whether and how the church building you're interested in is going to be disposed of.

The Congregation

Congregations have been merging across Scotland as part of the presbytery planning process. Make sure you know whether your congregation has completed its merger, and which congregations have been merged.



What do we mean by 'your community'?

Bedrule Church Future understood that the wider community associated with Bedrule Parish Church extended beyond the Rule Water in the Borders.

They contacted the 'Turnbull Clan Association' (TCA) based in North Carolina who had paid for their stain glass window. The TCA encouraged members to donate they ended up being key to raising the necessary funds.

More information in our second workshop on fundraising!





How can you involve your community?



How can you involve your community?

Invest **TIME** and **MONEY** into community engagement throughout the length of your project.

Six Key Principles:

- Be **REALISTIC**
- Be **TRANSPARENT**
- Be **INCLUSIVE**
- Be **CALM**
- Be **MEASURABLE**
- Be **ORGANISED**

Have **COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY!** No one individual should take the responsibility for community engagement work. Responsibilities should be shared across the team.



Types of engagement

Communication

- Transparent, honest, accessible, timely, relevant information about your plans and activities as a community group.

Consultation

- Inviting feedback on plans from community members, local groups, and other stakeholders.

Collaboration

- Engaging community members in the decision-making process and collaborating with key stakeholders.

Empowerment

Decision-making is put in the hands of the community through two-tier governance, two-way communication and ongoing engagement.



Types of engagement

Communication

Why?

- Keeps community updated
- Gets people interested
- Builds trust
- Attracts help and new resources
- Makes consultation and collaboration easier

How?

- Audience mapping
- Varied but accessible channels (newsletter, e-bulletin, noticeboard, website, social media, drop-in days, etc.)
- Focus on key messages
- Be informative and transparent

Consultation

Why?

- Finds out community needs/wants
- Reduces opposition risk
- Generates new ideas
- Increases participation
- Embeds 2-way conversation

How?

- Surveys, questionnaires, events, creative activities
- Clear, realistic, questions
- Closed and open questions
- Inclusive, accessible, participatory methods

Collaboration

Why?

- Conversion to active members and partners
- Attracts new skills, expertise, and insights
- Embeds project in community
- Key to success and action

How?

- Define supporter roles
- Advisory panels, working groups and subgroups
- Volunteers
- Trustees on Board
- Stakeholder engagement



Practical tips



INVOLVING YOUR COMMUNITY

A practical guide to the benefits and techniques for involving and consulting to communities in community asset based projects.

www.dtascommunityownership.org.uk

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 2 – CONSULTING – To obtain feedback on specific policies and proposals

Questionnaires

When to use

Questionnaires are useful when you want to gather views and get feedback on specific issues. For example, you may want to know how your community feels about a proposed closure of a public facility in the area and whether they think your group should be taking action on the issue. A questionnaire can be followed-up with a face-to-face activity which can provide more detailed insight into people's views and ideas, and allow those interested to get involved in planning and implementing future actions.

Objectives

- To gather quantitative (numbers) information from your community on specific issues.
- To reach large numbers of people, or target specific groups.

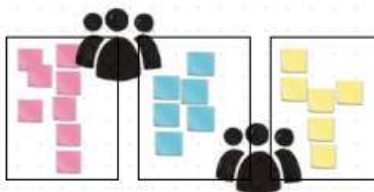
Methods

- Questionnaires can be carried out in a variety of ways. Using door-to-door collection is the most effective way to maximise your returns, although it is time consuming. If you are dropping off and picking up by hand, it is a good idea to attach a note to your questionnaire stating the day and approximate time you'll collect it.
- Stopping people in the street can work well if you are asking very few questions.
- Online questionnaires can be developed and distributed to a mailing list using free software such as SurveyMonkey. This site also helps you to collate and analyse your results. Twitter and Facebook can also be used to share the link to your online questionnaire. It is highly likely that you will be analysing the data in relation to the percentage of responses from your target population. It is therefore important that you consider including some identifying questions such as confirmation of membership – residence in a particular area – postcode etc.

- Keep the questionnaire as short as possible. For every question think about why you need that information and what purpose it serves in relation to the issue you are researching.
- Avoid leading questions such as "Do you agree that the community facilities here are rubbish?" Good questions are phrased in a neutral way to ensure answers reflect the respondent's views. For example, "How would you rate the facilities in this community? Very Good – Good – OK – Poor – Very Poor"
- Keep wording simple and only include one idea per question to avoid confusion.
- Have your opening questions arouse interest and ask easier questions first.
- Prepare 'closed' questions which can be answered by ticking boxes. You may need to include some 'open' questions which give you more detail but these are more difficult to analyse.
- It's a good idea to test out your questionnaire to ensure the questions are easy to understand and are likely to give you the information you are looking for.
- Include a covering letter which explains the purpose of the questionnaire and why it is important, both of which should motivate the recipient to complete it.
- A prize draw can offer a good incentive for people to complete and return your questionnaire!

Focus groups - Planning

Pink – positive
Blue – negative
Yellow – suggestions



Focus groups and workshops

Focus groups are basically about getting a group of people together, usually around 7-15 people in total, and asking their views on a set of questions. A really good aspect of focus groups is that people can build on and challenge each other's ideas, thereby creating some rich learning. For example, you can get people to discuss some findings that you already have, explore ideas, ask why they came to a particular view, and generally probe answers. For this to work effectively, it is a good idea to have both a facilitator to guide the discussion and a second person to take notes.

Confidentiality should be stated and agreed by everyone at the outset. It should also be respected after the event while the findings are analysed and reported on. Focus groups need to be planned in advance to ensure you get the information you're looking for.

Things to consider:

- How much/what kind of space do you need? Ensure it is appropriate for a focus group – comfortable, warm, and conducive to people wanting to stay and contribute.
- Do you need to provide support facilities, such as a crèche? Make sure these are available and meet the requirements of the participants.
- Can you provide tea and coffee? This will help people chat and break the ice on first arriving.
- What are the key questions you want to ask? Is there a logical order to put those questions in? How long have you got altogether and how much time can you reasonably allocate for each question?
- How many people do you need to help facilitate the event?

Some creative approaches to running workshops are outlined below. Again, these can be used and adapted to suit your purposes and contexts.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

AI is an approach to running focus groups or workshops where you want to get detailed insight into people's experiences and ideas. The process can be used at the early stage of your group's development, or later as a review and evaluation of past successes and a means of re-focusing energies for further actions. This is a method which would benefit from using a facilitator as experience is required to run it well.

Objectives

- To learn from past successes and consider what works well.
- To develop a vision for the future based on these successes.
- To stimulate a co-creation process to realise this vision.

Methods

AI typically has four stages:

1. **Discover:** Through a process of 'positive questioning', success stories should be drawn out from participants.

Examples of 'positive' questions

- What have been high points for you as a member of our community?
- What are your three wishes to make this a more enjoyable place to live?
- What do you imagine your role might be in making that happen?

The group then identify common themes about what works and what can be built on.

2. **Dream:** From the discover stage, a dream or shared vision for the future is developed. This is presented in a series of statements that sum up how your community would like to be in the future. The statements are challenging and stretch the notion of what's possible.
3. **Design:** The group identify what they need to do to realise their vision for the future through developing specific action plans.
4. **Deliver:** The implementation of the action plans.



INVOLVING YOUR COMMUNITY

A practical guide to the benefits and techniques for involving and consulting local communities in community asset based projects.

www.dtasccommunityownership.org.uk

APPENDICES

World Café

World Café is effective when you want to get a group of people talking about a particular issue, or series of related issues, in a relaxed setting. It can help in gathering collective views and ideas and allow people to work through issues together.

Objectives

- To generate discussion around things that matter.

Methods

- A theme for the café is decided beforehand and the event is publicised to encourage attendance from people whose views you wish to hear.
- The venue is set out like a café: small tables with paper tablecloths (or pieces of flipchart paper) so people can make notes or draw pictures to capture their conversation. It is important to make the space as welcoming and hospitable as possible.
- People get their refreshments and then gather around tables to talk about the issue. Participants are encouraged to discuss what is important to them and to hear other views. Questions or issues that genuinely matter to your community are identified and discussed while other small groups explore similar questions at nearby tables.
- After a reasonable period (30 minutes) people move around with one person staying to make sure that people find out about the previous conversations, share common themes and develop ideas further.
- The tablecloths or flipchart sheets are collected and used to make an exhibition at the end of the event.

See this simple guide for more info on running a World Café event:

www.theworldcafe.com/pdfs/cafetogo.pdf

Larger consultation and planning meetings

There are different ways in which you can involve much larger numbers of people and make such events useful and meaningful.

One way of reaching a large audience is to incorporate your consultation into another community event such as a Family Fun Day which you expect a lot of local people will attend. For example, you might have a stall with information boards and interactive ways for people to respond to questions and share their views such as placing post-its on a feedback wall.

The methods for running planning meetings outlined below are highly participative and designed to give people ownership over the discussions, planning and implementation of action points which emerge. These are not prescriptive and elements of these methods can be used and adapted to suit your own needs and purposes.

(i) Future Search

Future Search is a planning meeting which can be used when you want to bring together large numbers of people (60-80 in one room) to engage in task-focused discussion. The purpose is to focus on a future position for the project or the organisation. Future Search and other visioning techniques should be managed by an experienced facilitator to ensure that the outcomes are achieved.

A topic or title for the session which focuses discussions is identified in advance. Participants meet for 16 hours spread across three days.

People tell stories about their past, present and desired future. Through dialogue they discover their common ground which leads them to make concrete action plans.

Objectives

- To bring people from all walks of life into the same conversation.
- To build capacity for action quickly.

Methods

The process outlined below usually involves four or five sessions each lasting half a day.

- People make timelines of key events in the world, their own lives, and in the history of the Future Search topic. Small groups tell stories about each timeline and the implications of their stories for the work they have come to do.
- The whole group makes a 'mind map' of trends affecting them now and identifies those trends most important for their topic.
- Groups describe what they are doing now about key trends and what they want to do in the future.
- Groups report what they are positive and negative about in the way they are dealing with the Future Search topic.
- Groups put themselves into the future and describe their preferred future as if it has already been accomplished.
- Groups post themes they believe are common ground for everyone and then the whole group discusses them.
- Volunteers sign up to implement action plans.

(ii) Planning for Real®

This technique uses 3D models as a focus for people to put forward and prioritise ideas on how their area, or a particular building/space, can be improved. It is a highly visual, hands-on community development tool which people of all abilities and backgrounds find easy and enjoyable to use. This particular approach would need to be facilitated by someone who has been trained in the use of the tool.

Objectives

- To generate enthusiasm and encourage people to engage creatively in the planning process.
- To inform the development of an action plan for a physical space.

Methods

- Large 3D models of an area or building are constructed. This could be done by local people with the trained worker's help if needed. These are deliberately not an architectural type model.
- The model can be used in pre-advertised sessions in different locations around the community.
- In the sessions, participants are given suggestion cards or post-it notes to write on, as well as cards with pre-written descriptions or pre-designed images. The cards are to help participants give their views.
- Participants can deal their hand of cards onto the model, indicating what they want to see happen and where. Models of buildings, cars, bus stops, schools etc. can also be used.
- Each suggestion is noted as the process develops. Taking photos of the model and suggestion gives a good visual aid to the process that can be used to give feedback to participants.
- Suggestions are prioritised by the community and with the involvement of key stakeholders; an Action Plan is formed which the community uses to develop future plans.

NB: Planning for Real® is a registered trademark and part of the Accord Group. Organisations wishing to run "Planning for Real"® events, provide "Planning for Real"® training or to describe themselves as users of a "Planning for Real"® approach should first contact "Planning for Real"® to discuss their requirements. www.planningforreal.org.uk.



Practical tips

- Create a 'live' **Community Engagement Plan**
 - Plan community engagement for each stage of the process.
- Regularly **reflect and refine your plan** – things will change throughout the process.
- Ensure community engagement is **central to governance and internal processes**.
 - Review governing documents to make sure that involving your community is at the heart of your organisation.
- Embed community engagement in any **project briefs or tender documents**.
 - Makes sure any external consultants also prioritise community engagement.
- Ensure all activities undertaken **respond to identified community need/wishes**
 - Firstly, find what the community needs, then continuously attempt to meet those needs through your project.
- Do your best to continuously **uphold the 6 Key Principles**, and make sure to **communicate with, consult, and collaborate with your community**.
- **MAINTAIN TWO-WAY FEEDBACK BETWEEN COMMUNITY AND ORGANISATION**



INVOLVING YOUR COMMUNITY

A practical guide to the benefits and techniques for involving and consulting local communities in community asset based projects.

www.dtascommunityownership.org.uk

APPENDIX 4 – Planning template for community consultation

The template detailed provides a guide on how you might structure a community consultation and identify the activities and resources required. This example has been based on an established organisation with a membership base and at least one paid member of staff. The project is one where a community is looking to take on an asset. It may well be the case that with new groups/organisations much of the activity will be delivered by volunteers. The costs have been deliberately left blank as there is likely to be a reasonably high degree of variation between the different communities – established membership base – size of the community etc.

Level	Objectives What are the intended outcomes	Audience Who will you communicate with?	Medium How will you communicate?	Owner/Deliverer Who is responsible for doing this?	Cost £	Frequency					
						Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
Informing	To provide people with information about the recent work of the organisation and new project information	- All members - Wider community	Newsletter A4 x4 – distributed by email to membership base and other community organisations. Paper-based copies available in key locations – shops/post office/library	Project Officer and Board – Communication sub group		X					
			Establish website for the new project	Site built by volunteer member with content and updates provided by the Project Officer		X	X	X	X	X	X
			Articles in local press highlighted new project	Chair of Board		X	X				
Consulting		- All members - Wider community - Other stakeholders identified	Questionnaire distributed by email using Survey Monkey. Paper-based copies available through key local locations	Project Officer and Board Project Sub Group				X	X		
			Host public meeting to discuss the questionnaire results in more detail and gain commitment to move the project forward	Organised by Project Officer and Board Project Sub Group External Facilitator						X	
			Arrange interviews with key stakeholders to discuss initial community feedback and outline proposals	Project Officer						X	
Engaging	Establish a Community Advisory Panel to take project forward	Interested individuals with a wide range of skills who have volunteered or been co-opted during the consultation process	Meetings and email	Project Officer and Board Project Group							X



Techniques: Traditional community engagement



Early-stage community engagement: how might you do it?

Communicate

- Let your local community know you're exploring a community buyout of a church building
- Use posters (online and in-person) and attend as many events within your community as you can

Consult

- Send out an initial community survey, gauging support for community ownership of your church building
- This doesn't have to be groundbreaking, but should reflect your local area

Collaborate

- Meet with the building's current user groups, including the congregation, to discuss the future of the building
- Be inclusive, while maintaining boundaries between different groups with their own interests



Early-stage community engagement: how might you do it?



**Can we keep
the former
Willowbrae Parish
Church building for our
community?**

We want to hear from you.

The building is expected to be put up for sale soon.
email: jockslodgett@gmail.com

**Jock's Lodge
Community
Trust**

SCAN ME



or
bit.ly/3LLCQ0R



What have you found interesting about the Wamphray walk?

Wamphray Church is going to be sold - Do you see a role for the building in the future if it was held in community ownership?

What ideas do you have for the church and the surrounding nature in the future?

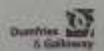
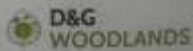
Would you be willing to help with any future plans for the Church should it be held in community ownership ("community" can be geographic community or a community of interest. For instance, heritage or nature interests)?

Do you have skills you would be prepared to share to help?

Are you happy for us to contact you if this is taken forward in the future?

Your name, postcode and contact details:

Thank you very much for taking part in the walk and for your time.

Techniques: Heritage-based engagement





Heritage-based engagement

Historic Environment Scotland's '[Talking about Heritage](#)' guidance is a good place to start when wanting to use heritage to get people involved in your project

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING SIGNIFICANCE

Significance is a big topic, so it helps to break it down into these simple questions that you can ask yourself:

STEP 1: WHAT IS IT?

Think in detail about the place, object or other thing that you're analysing.

A key part of this is to think about any physical elements:

- How much survives of what was once there?
- What does it look like?
- How much has it changed over time?

You may have to ask slightly different questions for things that aren't physical. For example, you could consider how stories change as they are told time and again.

STEP 2: WHAT IS ITS CONTEXT?

Next, examine where the thing that you're analysing sits in the wider world. Even if something is unique, it will still have wider relationships.

You can think about its context in terms of place and time as well as ideas and traditions:

- What is its history? How was it used in the past, and how is it used now?
- Does it have relationships to other objects? What about other stories, events or stories?
- Is there anything like it? Can you find any other examples? Is your example unusual? Or is it in especially good condition?
- Does it have a wider meaning to people? Do people tell stories or sing songs about it? Is it something that people would recognise from a painting or photo? Has its meaning changed with time?

STEP 3: WHAT VALUES DO PEOPLE PLACE ON IT?

You should now be in a good position to think about what values people invest in the place, object or other thing you're analysing.

You can break down cultural significance into various values.

At Historic Environment Scotland, we often talk about:

- **Aesthetic value** – how we experience physical things; how they look, sound and feel.
- **Historic value** – something's place in history. Did it change or influence ideas, events or people? Or was it influenced by them?
- **Scientific value** – something that can contribute to research. Can it tell us more about the past?
- **Social value** – spiritual or cultural meaning for a certain community or group. You could think about how your community uses a building or public space.

Speak to other people to better grasp the full range of values linked to the heritage you're interested in.

People's views about heritage often differ. Heritage that is 'special' to one person or group may be seen differently by another – they may want it challenged, changed or even destroyed. Heritage that inspires heated debate is sometimes known as contested heritage.

How people think about heritage can also change with time. Capturing this diversity of values can be the most rewarding part of the process.

We worked with the University of Stirling to look at the significance of heritage to communities. Find out more on the [Weaving with Social Value](#) website.



TALKING ABOUT HERITAGE



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA

SEP 2022



Organise a church recording

Scotland's Churches Trust's [Church Recorders Handbook](#)

Innovative methodology for recording the contents of a church building

Good way to engage volunteers

Designed to assist volunteers with recording the contents of Scotland's closing down church buildings

Research in Action on Church Heritage are putting this into practice with 10 churches across Scotland



SCOTLAND'S
CHURCHES TRUST



CHURCH RECORDERS' HANDBOOK

Created by Scotland's Churches Trust, as part of an Historic Environment Scotland supported pilot project, to assist future volunteers with recording the contents of Scotland's closing church buildings.





Organise a church recording

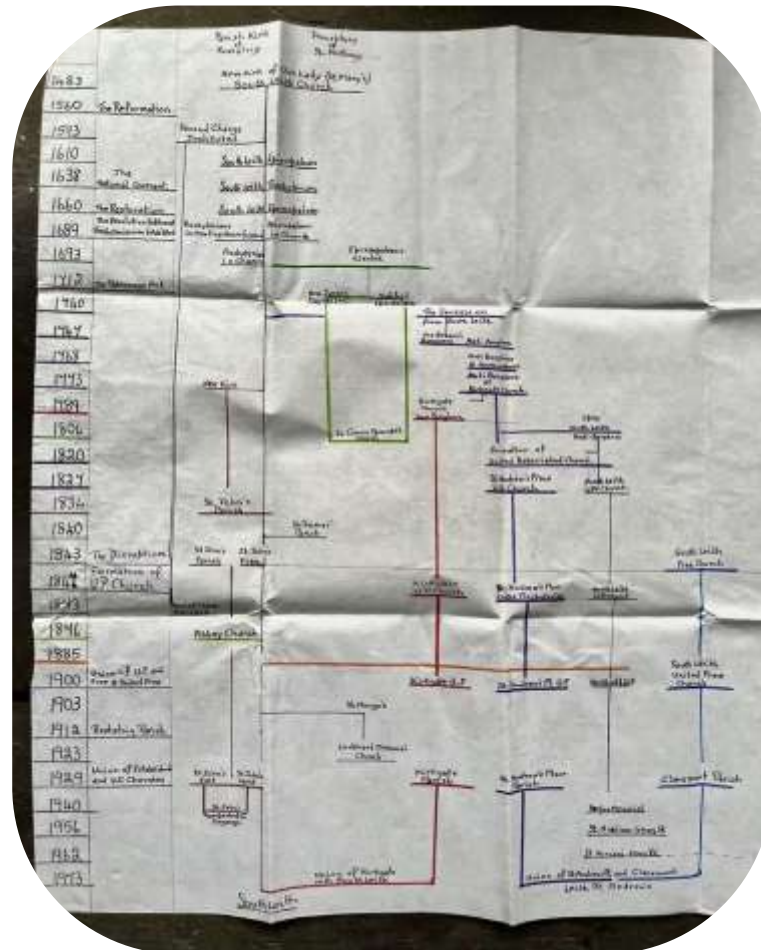


RESEARCH IN ACTION
ON CHURCH HERITAGE





Leith St Andrews – local history project – archival and oral



Key points

- Opportunity for community engagement with Leith St. Andrew's Trust
- Heritage education and engagement on the history of the church and its wider community
- Tribute & celebration of the church's heritage ahead of any next phase of life





Leith St Andrews – local history project – archival and oral

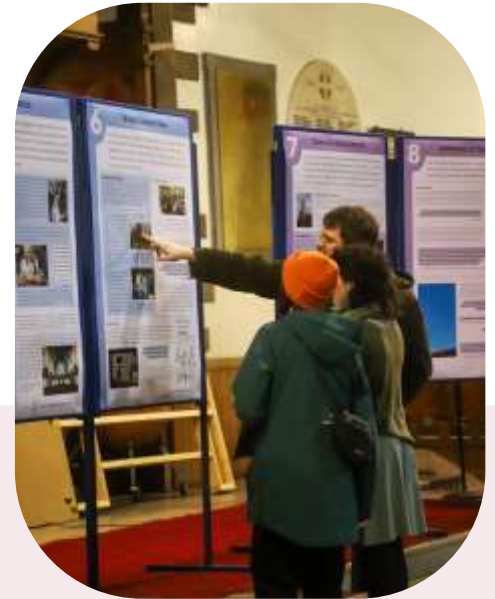


Phase One: Archival research

LSAT worked with a rich set of archival sources to document the church's history. This gave a more detailed sense of the different congregations and denominations that have called the building home, important leaders and events, changes to the physical fabric of the building and activities over the years.

Phase Two: Oral History

Oral history interviews were carried out with a range of individuals reflecting different aspects of the life of the church. This offered a way for members of the community to participate directly in weaving the church's multi-layered past into a shared story.



Phase Three: Sharing with the community

LSAT curated a public exhibition and held a series of events in the church. This provided an opportunity for local residents to learn about the church's history, to reflect on the role it has played locally, and to become involved in the Trust and its purchase campaign.



Leith St Andrews – local history project – archival and oral

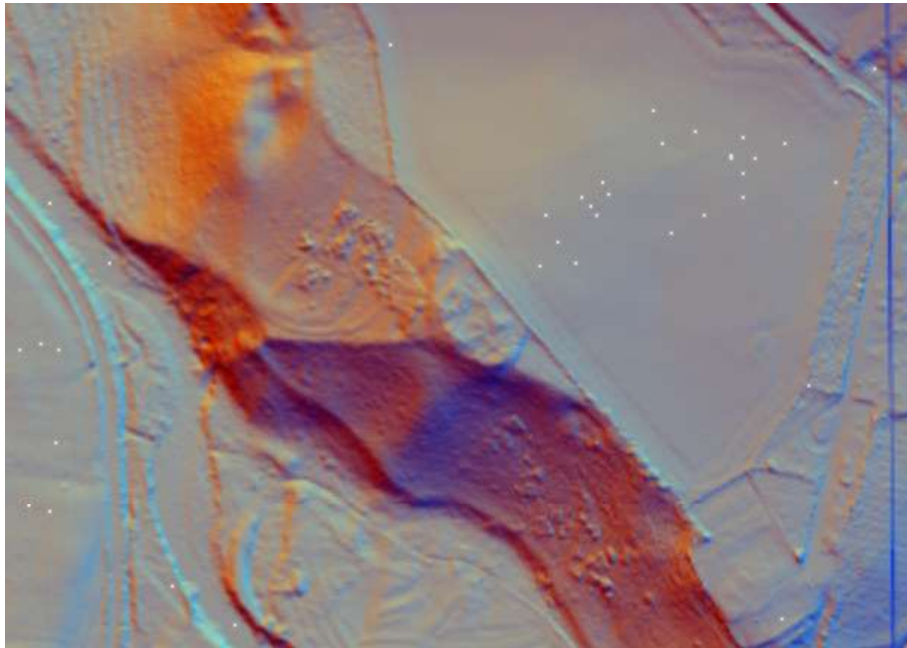


Project outcomes

- **Creating a historical record**
Drawing from archival and oral sources to document the history of Leith St. Andrew's
- **Establishing a presence**
Expanding and deepening social media content, demonstrating ability to deliver a project to future funders
- **Reaching new audiences**
Drawing in people who had never been in the building before, connecting them with the building's past
- **Recruiting members and volunteers**
Tripled our membership, 5 new expressions of interest in volunteering



Bedrule Church Future - Local heritage and archaeology





What does successful engagement look like?



What does successful engagement look like?

Success isn't necessarily about the number of participants – it's about the **depth, diversity and quality** of the engagement.

Is your engagement **effective, efficient, fair** and does it provide the foundation for **shared decision-making, shared action, support for community-led action**?

Useful indicators include **representation** in your organisation, **trust and influence** within and beyond your community, **collaboration** with a wide range of stakeholders, and **feedback loops**.



What does successful engagement look like?

Community empowerment: the ideal scenario – what you might say about yourselves...

Our membership is representative of our community, we have an active Board with the skills, experience and capacity to manage the organisation, **we have a regular rotation of Board members drawn from our active community**, our community is supportive of ALL our projects and activities, **we get great feedback and supportive comments to our online posts**, our events have a healthy turnout with many residents from all demographics participating, **our projects are undertaken in response to community needs and wishes**, our two-tier governance structure is working well with regular engagement with our members, **we have resident members on our working subgroups**, our consultation processes are well responded to by all demographics, **we have effectively engaged with hard to reach groups and they are now active members**, we have great relations with local businesses and stakeholders, **local groups and businesses regularly reach out to us for collaboration on projects**, we have influence locally because we are respected, **the community trust us to do what is right for them**, we have an open membership and our community know that when they reach out to us we will meaningfully engage with them, **we attract investment because we can demonstrate community support and benefit**, local residents want to work and volunteer with us, **we have confidence in our approach and activities**, our Board is energised and feeling positive, **we are respected by key stakeholders and public sector bodies**, because of our positive relationship with the community and key stakeholders we are more financially viable.



What does successful engagement look like?





What does successful engagement look like?

See for yourself!

Learn from communities who have been through similar experiences. Make use of the [Community Learning Exchange](#)

- Claim back host fees, travel costs etc.
- Visit any peer learning organisation across the UK

Liaise with your Churches Advisor for any hints or advice on which community group you should speak to for help..



Copyright DTAS – St Monans



Now, any questions?

Please raise your hand (virtually) to ask a question or pop it in the chat!



Next Workshop: Mainstream Funders

[Finance and Fundraising 1: Mainstream Funders](#) – 27/10/26 11:00-13:00

Please sign up to hear from the key funders:

- Scottish Land Fund
- Historic Environment Scotland
- Architectural Heritage Fund
- National Lottery Heritage Fund

Scottish Land Fund
Ionmhas Fearainn Na H-Alba



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA

AHF Transforming
Heritage
www.ahfund.org.uk



**Heritage
Fund**



Contact details

Audrey Dunn, Churches Advisor (North of Scotland):

audrey@dtascot.org.uk , 07956 730149

Claire Martin, Churches Advisor (South and Central Scotland):

claire.martin@dtascot.org.uk , 07903 059822

Harry Whitmore, Churches Advisor (South and Central Scotland):

harry.whitmore@dtascot.org.uk , 07903 060475

Addie Maher, Churches Programme Officer:

addie.maher@dtascot.org.uk

DTA Scotland, 1B Washington Lane, Edinburgh, EH11 2HA

<https://dtascommunityownership.org.uk/>

BlueSky - [DTAScotland](#) / [Community Ownership Support Service](#) / [Democratic Finance Scotland](#)

LinkedIn - [DTAScotland](#) Facebook - [DTAScotland](#) Instagram - [DTAScotland](#)

DTA Scotland is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) No. SC034231

Browse our upcoming **events** and sign up [HERE](#)



**Development
Trusts Association
Scotland**

A Thriving Community-led Network

Harry Whitmore – Churches Advisor

harry.whitmore@dtascot.org.uk

07903 060475

www.dtascommunityownership.org.uk