

# Democratic Finance Scotland

## DTAS Annual Report

April 2024 - March 2025

Democratic Finance Scotland is a programme of support for community led organisations to explore and use alternative methods of raising finance and funding. Specifically, methods where the money is:

- sourced locally from citizens and local businesses
- used locally to start or grow community enterprises or purchase sustainable community assets

### Highlights from the Year



172  
Organisations  
Supported



2048 citizens investing  
into community owned  
businesses



11 Democratic  
Finance Offers  
Launched



40 jobs created in  
community owned  
businesses



£1,040,400 raised  
in community  
shares



41 workshops  
delivered to over  
1000 attendees

## Democratic Finance Community Development Support

### Early stage enquires and support

In the period April 2024 – March 2025 the Democratic Finance Scotland programme responded to 92 early-stage enquiries from groups, including several community pubs, hubs and renewable energy projects, seeking support on areas such as their legal structure, information on community shares and bonds, business planning and signposting to other organisations.

### Democratic finance offers launched

This year we supported the launch of 11 democratic finance offers - detailed below. Collectively these offers have raised over £1 million from over 2048 investors. These democratic finance offers have also leveraged an additional approximately £2.8 million into their community businesses via grants, loans and donation-based crowdfunding.

These groups received development support on their documentation including business plans and financial projections in addition to guidance on marketing and PR, community engagement and access to our microgrant fund.

Group	Type of Democratic Finance	Amount Raised	Number of Investors
Gargunnock Community Shop	Community shares	£63k	255
Inn at Kingsbarns	Community shares	£400k	202
Glenwyvis Distillery 2	Community shares	£141k	175
Roam Scotland	Community shares	£1.5k	60
Dundee Solar 2	Community shares	£400k	589
Morebattle Community Pub	Community shares	£97k	149
Wigtown Community Inn	Community shares	£31k	450
Oakbank Community Inn	Community shares	£18k (to date)	168
Action Porty – Bellfield Church	Community shares	£49k (to date)	Data in Q1 25
Glenug Community Inn	Community shares	£200k (to date)	Data in Q1 25
Cranhill Development Trust	Local legacy giving	tbc	Data in Q1 25



## Community Shares Standard Mark

We use the [Community Shares Standard Mark](#) framework to support all groups to develop high quality share offer documents, underpinned by thorough business and finance plans. Groups raising more than £100k can submit their documentation for the full assessment process and we are delighted that the Inn at Kingsbarns Community Benefit Society and Glenug Community Inn were awarded the Community Shares Standard Mark this year.

Alongside Coops UK's Community Shares Unit, who manage and administer the Community Shares Standard Mark, we will be undertaking a review of the Standard Mark in 2025. The Standard Mark is 10 years old, and the review will explore whether it is still fit for purpose and whether any changes are needed.

## In-depth development support pipeline

In addition to the recently launched community share offers, we have more than 80 groups in our development pipeline. Throughout a group's democratic finance journey, we support them on community benefit society governance and registration, ongoing community engagement and marketing, in addition to business planning and financial modelling.

## Community pubs programme with Plunkett UK

We continue to work with Plunkett UK on the Scottish Community Pubs programme. The programme provides business advice to communities in Scotland looking to bring their local pub into community ownership, as well as support for those already trading. The number of trading

community pubs in Scotland has grown from 4 in 2021 to 16 today, and this year 10 new community pub groups joined the network.

In partnership with Plunkett UK, this year we produced two in-depth case study videos - highlighting the strengths and challenges of the community pub model, and the diversity of support available through the pubs programme. These will be live in May 2025.

## Events and Resources

### Democratic finance events and webinars

We have delivered 41 events and webinars on the democratic finance programme covering a range of topics including introductory sessions on community shares and bonds, philanthropic and legacy giving for development trusts, community engagement, and community ownership of renewables. Our events and webinars have reached over 1000 people and organisations.

Some highlights include

- The official launch of the Democratic Finance Scotland programme at the DTAS Annual Conference
- Close working with the Scottish Land Fund team to ensure democratic finance complements SLF grants
- Two workshops at the Local Energy Scotland CARES conference – focused on community ownership of energy
- ‘Introduction to Democratic Finance’ with various Third Sector Interfaces across Scotland
- Green Party Conference workshop on democratic finance and community energy

We also facilitated two in depth democratic finance workshops at the DTAS Annual Conference on:

- Community shared ownership of renewables and the potential for democratic finance
- The community pub model with learning journeys from two pubs, The Anchor Tavern on Bute and the Inn at Kingsbarns in Fife.



## Community Shares Finance Guide

Following the launch of the [Community Shares Finance Guide](#) (co-funded by Co-operatives UK, DTAS and Plunkett UK) in May 2024 we continue to use this resource to support groups with:

- Managing members' interests in relation to community shares interest and withdrawals
- Annual returns and how to account for community shares
- Audit requirements

## Community Energy Developments

### The Scottish Community Coalition on Energy

We continue to work very closely with member organisations Community Energy Scotland and Community Land Scotland in a coalition focused on '[A Fair Energy Deal for Scottish Communities](#)'.

The drive to net zero by 2045 and expansion of renewable energy in Scotland provides a huge opportunity to secure meaningful community benefits, support community-owned renewables and the coalition's aims to ensure that wealth being generated from Scotland's natural resources is shared fairly across Scotland.

Following our initial paper outlining our key asks, we have produced 4 follow up papers outlining more specific actions for the Scottish and UK Governments to address the growing inequity between communities and the energy system. The papers are

1. [Accelerating community owned energy](#)
2. [New standards for community benefit funds](#)
3. [Increasing uptake of community shared ownership opportunities](#)
4. [A Scottish community wealth fund](#)

**SSE Renewables shared ownership research** – This year we were commissioned by SSE renewables to produce a research report 'Exploring the role of the Community Benefit Society governance model and democratic community led finance in community shared ownership of offshore wind'. This report can be [read here](#).

### Community Benefits Funds – Member Research and Consultation Response

In December 2024 we undertook a survey of DTAS membership on their views and experience of Community Benefit Funds from renewable energy. This was commenced prior to the announcement of the SG consultation on Community Benefit Funds from Net Zero Developments but gave us important input into our consultation response. We held one consultation event for DTAS members and participated in a number of others run by SCCE partners. We published a [blog](#) along with our consultation response.



## Other Programme Developments

### Grassroots Legacy and Philanthropic Giving

Over the past year, the democratic finance programme has continued to develop a partnership with [WeWill](#) to launch a Local Legacy Giving pilot scheme for Development Trusts to increase their legacy income. Through the pilot scheme, DTAS and WeWill are supporting 9 Development Trusts over a 12-month period to develop their own local legacy giving campaigns. This is being delivered through 1-1 support and workshops and the use of the WeWill platform to encourage local people to consider a legacy to the Trust in their will.

As part of the pilot we have delivered 3 local legacy giving workshops this year:

- Introduction to Local Legacy Giving
- Deep Dive in Local Legacy Giving
- How to launch a Local Legacy Campaign webpage

### Democratic Finance Booster Fund

We have continued to develop a Community Shares Booster Fund for Scotland, in partnership with Foundation Scotland, Firstport and the Scottish Government. A Booster Fund will match the investment sourced through community shares, effectively boosting the amount communities can raise. This will be focused on disadvantaged and underrepresented communities where the community has less disposable income to invest in a share offer. We anticipated the first Booster investment will be made in the first half of 2025.

### Community Bonds Development

Scottish Communities Finance Ltd has led on community bonds development and delivery over the year. DTAS has supported some early-stage groups to investigate bonds and will focus more on this in the year going forward.

## Programme Income, Funding and Official Launch

### Future funding

We have secured programme funding for 2025/26 from Scottish Government and Acorns 2 Trees. We have also been successful in securing 3 years of co-funding (2024 – 2027) from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation 'Creative, Confident Communities' funding programme.

### Programme branding and official launch

This year we officially launched the Democratic Finance Scotland programme at the DTAS Annual Conference including the launch of our new branding and website – [www.democraticfinance.scot](http://www.democraticfinance.scot)

## The Year Ahead

Over the past two years, we have collaborated with Scottish Communities Finance Ltd (SCF) to develop and deliver the Democratic Finance Scotland programme. We thank SCF Ltd for their role in developing and co-founding the programme.

We have mutually agreed to dissolve the partnership and DTAS will take forward the Democratic Finance Scotland programme independently, ensuring it aligns fully with our mission to empower communities and social enterprises.



### Focus areas for the year ahead

We have ambitious plans to elevate the programme profile and reach and deliver impactful outcomes for communities. Our key areas of focus over the coming year are:

- Continued communications and awareness raising to increase the number of community-led organisations engaging with democratic finance. This will include the production of a Marketing, Communications and Events plan, simple factsheets and early-stage resources.
- Continued in-depth, expert development support to organisations using democratic finance models – with increased use of the Community Shares Standard Mark. Plus a focus

on working more collaboratively with other community business planning consultants to ensure a joined-up approach, particularly on business planning and financial forecasting.

- We will continue to influence key government policy via advisory groups and consultations – specifically ensuring that democratic finance is integral to the Scottish Government’s ongoing development of Inclusive Democratic Business Models, the Community and Renewable Energy Scheme, Community Wealth Building and Democracy Matters.
- Continued development work as part of the Scottish Community Coalition on Energy working groups – focused on how democratic finance can propel forward community owned energy projects. Including sitting on the CARES Advisory Board.
- Further partnership working with Plunkett UK on the Scottish Community Pubs support programme.
- Further research into democratic finance tools and topics including one-off community lotteries and better use of Common Good Funds.
- Continued support through our Local Legacy Giving Pilot – including the launch of local legacy campaigns and the development of a wider suite of local legacy resources.
- Development of our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion approach including democratic finance models in ethnically diverse communities, urban cold spots and communities with higher levels of deprivation.
- A community bonds evaluation exploring current market demand and the support requirements. This will lead to the development of a community bonds Standard Mark similar to the community shares framework.
- Continued partnership working with key intermediaries including – Community Land Scotland, Local Energy Scotland, Community Energy Scotland, Community Enterprise, Just Enterprise, Plunkett UK, Foundation Scotland, CEMVO and enterprise agencies HIE and SOSE.

Morven Lyon - Head of Democratic Finance  
DTA Scotland  
May 2025