















DEMOCRATIC FINANCE SCOTLAND

Development Trusts Association Scotland
A Thriving Community-led Network

Crowdfunder Guide

This guide is for community groups who are looking to raise money for their community projects such as a pub or shop buyout, energy scheme or community hub. It covers the key steps to running a successful crowdfunding campaign.

This resource has been produced by Democratic Finance Scotland, to inform communities about their crowdfunding options, obligations, and opportunities.













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What is crowdfunding?

Simply put, crowdfunding is raising money from a group of people, often to fund a project that meets a community's needs.

For community projects, crowdfunding can be used as an alternative to grants, community shares or loans, or as a great way to match these other sources of funding. It brings together support from people in your community and further afield who want to help make your project happen.



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Why run a crowdfunding campaign?

The main reason for running a crowdfunding campaign is to raise money and build community 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 sources may not be available.

You could use crowdfunding to raise the money for:

- an early-stage feasibility study
- purchase of an 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
- galvanise people to donate when they see others doing the same
- encourage people to support you through volunteering, advocating, advertising, etc.

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

Brig Inn Pub & Hub

The Brig Inn had been part of life in Brydekirk for generations, so when it closed in 2020, the community felt they had lost a treasured meeting place and focal point for the village.

After years of campaigning by the Brig Inn Pub and Hub committee, the owners agreed to sell to the local community so they could restore it to a friendly, warm social space. With support from the Scottish Land Fund offering to cover 95% of the buildings valuation, the group of local residents set to work, putting together a Crowdfunder to raise the £30,000 funding gap to secure the pub and unlock major funding to begin the next phase, repairing, restoring and transforming the Brig Inn.

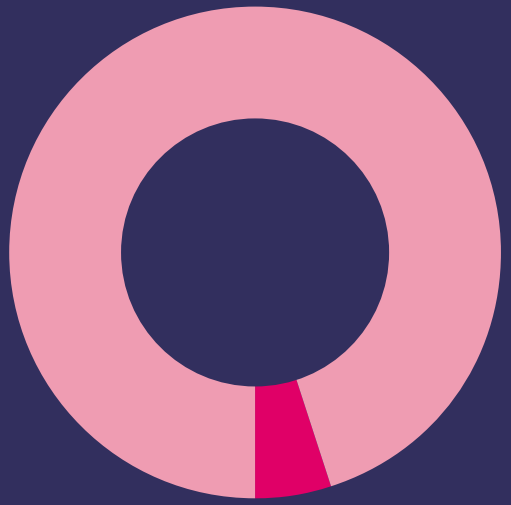
Following a focussed, time sensitive campaign in December 2025, the group were able to successfully raise the funds needed, by incentivising potential supporters with limited edition Brig Inn rewards, gaining local and national press coverage and a consistent, clear social media campaign.

They are now another step closer to their vision of creating a place run by the community, for the community. You can read a Q&A with the Brig Inn on their campaign further on in this resource.

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95% of funding secured via the Scottish Land Fund



5% needed via Crowdfunding

270 supporters

with donations ranging from **£5** to **£1000**

rewards included

- Brig Inn Fridge Magnet
- Brig Inn Beer Mat
- Name plaque in the pub

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What platforms could we use, and do they charge?

There are several crowdfunding platforms in the UK, with two of the most well-known being Crowdfunder UK and GoFundMe.

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

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

So, for example if you were to raise £50,000 through Crowdfunder, then with the transaction fee, VAT plus payment processing fees (typically 1.5% to 2%) the overall campaign fees could be in the range of £2,000-£3000.

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

For further information on this visit – GoFundMe Pricing and Fees or Crowdfunder Crowdfunder Fees. Other options you may wish to consider are JustGiving, Kickstarter or CAF Donate.

TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT PLATFORM FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN IT'S WORTH CONSIDERING:

Fees and payment processing costs

Support for Gift Aid

Ease of use and integration with your website

Fundraising model (donation-based, reward-based etc)

Reporting and analytics capabilities

By evaluating these factors, you can select a platform that maximises donations while minimising costs and administrative effort.

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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 to a campaign,
- size of your existing networks,
- visibility of your campaign
- attractiveness of your proposal.

When planning a crowdfunder, you should consider how many people might donate by looking at:

- your local population and demographics
- members (if you are constituted)
- diaspora
- other potential stakeholders

This can help to estimate the average contribution and size of your pool of supporters.

Based on our experience of supporting groups and looking at the Crowdfunding market more widely, typically groups raise **between £25k-£50k** with a proactive, engaging and well organised campaign. There are examples of groups raising a lot more, but these examples are often outliers with unique aspects.

Key success factors

- **Time and effort**
- **Campaign visibility**
- **Network size**
- **Proposal attractiveness**

Your audience target groups might include:

- **Local population**
- **Existing members**
- **Diaspora**
- **Key stakeholders**

How to estimate your target

Potential Donors X **Average Contribution £20-£50** = **Estimated Target**

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Targets

There are generally two types of targets you can set during your campaign – initial and stretch.

Start by identifying the minimum amount you need to make this phase of your project happen, and what feels achievable. If you hit your minimum once you're up and running, you can add a 'stretch' to raise even more.

However, 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.

Alternatively, the "all or nothing" model means if you don't reach your target, you don't receive any funds as they are given back to supporters. This approach can typically attract larger donations, groups avoid starting projects without enough funding and the fixed goal and deadline can create a sense of urgency.



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What makes a successful crowdfunding campaign?

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

1 | Planning

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 their support?
- how will you reach your potential supporters?

Getting off to a good start greatly improves your chance of success. Form a working group to delegate roles and responsibilities before you start your campaign - utilising everyone's strengths. Collective responsibility is key!

You should think about key dates within the campaign, which typically run for around 6 weeks. If you are running a very local campaign, you might plan to align with other events and think about how key times of the year such as school holidays or Christmas, might affect how your supporters engage.

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.

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

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



Campaigns that raise

30% of their goal

within the first week are more likely to succeed

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2 | Creating your campaign

The next step is to prepare the materials you'll use to share 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 concise and captivating way.

The campaign page should give the reader all the key information but still be **concise and attention grabbing**.

Your story

Think about your story including information on what are you raising the funds for, why it is important and why it should be supported.

You will have the option to add images and videos to **bring your page to life**. Videos can be a very effective way to get the attention of supporters, and the Democratic Finance team have a Microgrant available to cover some of the costs.

It is 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.

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 if relevant
- relevant history
- interview with those involved in the project and why it's important
- future plans

Also think about any other promotional material 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 in a noticeable location to get people's attention
- leaflets with a QR code which could be put through people's doors

Remember to keep the messaging succinct!





+86%

success rate with video

Campaigns featuring a video are nearly twice as likely to reach their target. (Source: Crowdfunder)

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3 | 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 people to donate before the campaign goes live will be beneficial as once people see that others have donated, they will be more likely to follow.

Think about:

- local community
- diaspora – people with links or emotional ties to your community
- businesses, schools, and other local organisations
- High Net Worth Individuals (HNWI)

CASE STUDY

Fountainbridge Canalside Community Trust (FCCT)

Fountainbridge Canalside Community Trusts (FCCT) Reunion Canal Boats supports and encourages communities to engage positively with the canal, providing funded social inclusion and mental health trips and activities, special events such as Edinburgh Canal Festival, community group trips and private hires.

In November 2025, they launched a Crowdfunder to raise money to replace their iconic Lochrin Bell barge with a new sustainable widebeam barge with bigger windows, more desk space and an electric drive. Following a successful campaign including coverage of their story by STV, they managed to raise over £10,000 from over 120 people and local organisations, with match funding from the Aviva Community Fund.

With bigger windows, more deck space and an electric drive, the new boat will offer a better experience for passengers, support a greener, cleaner Canal and enabling them to continue their private hires and community projects on the canal for many years to come.



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4 | Running your campaign

Once your campaign is live, spreading the word is vital to it's 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
- marketing and action plan – creating a **plan of action** in terms of marketing and delegating tasks will keep the campaign focused
- enlist volunteers with **specific strengths** – who is comfortable chatting face to face? Who is good at marketing and social media etc?
- organise a dedicated launch event and tag on to **local events** throughout the campaign to raise awareness about your plans amongst the wider community
- **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
- think about your local networks – friends, family, businesses who might donate and get their contact details
- enlist **local businesses support** - they could be willing to offer financial or in-kind support, or simply put a poster in their window
- think about how people in your community like to engage – not everyone has social media or is digitally literate, so **adapting methods** is key
- give regular updates on your campaign page and social media to **keep people informed** and maintain moment
- **be relentless** with the messaging and staying positive! People need to hear something several times before they will donate

Have a look at our campaign checklist (appendix 2) and use a tool for running your campaign

4 to 6 weeks

ideal campaign duration

Form a steering group
and delegate key roles

Map local contacts
(family, friends, local businesses)

Host a launch event
to build early momentum

Combine digital and offline
outreach channels

Give updates
to connect with donors and maintain momentum

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Rewards

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 volunteers or board members.

Rewards

As part of your campaign, you may wish to offer 'rewards' - incentives to encourage people to donate sums of money. It is 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.



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CASE STUDY – REWARDS

The Tower, Helensburgh

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 that donors' expectations were set appropriately.



THE TOWER'S DONOR REWARDS

All Pledges	Above £50	Above £200	Above £ 1000
All pledges will receive:	**Pledges will receive:**	**Pledges will receive:**	**Pledges will receive:**
I SAVED THE TOWER certificate	I SAVED THE TOWER certificate	I SAVED THE TOWER certificate	I SAVED THE TOWER certificate
I SAVED THE TOWER Fridge magnet	I SAVED THE TOWER Fridge magnet	I SAVED THE TOWER Fridge magnet	I SAVED THE TOWER Fridge magnet
	I SAVED THE TOWER T Shirt	I SAVED THE TOWER T Shirt	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)	Your name on our huge Keystone founders Boards situated in the Tower's Atrium.
As well as the above Recognition & Rewards, Pledgers will be invited to our We Saved The Tower Donators Day.			

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Our Support

DTAS' programme (formerly Community Shares Scotland) has been running for 10 years with an experienced and knowledgeable team.

We can offer **1 day of free support** to groups who are looking to undertake a crowdfunding campaign focussing on areas such as campaign marketing, community engagement and resources. We can also provide a small microgrant to fund campaign costs.

To find out more please get in touch with katie@dtas.org.uk.



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Appendix 1 – Brig Inn

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Q&A

1. What is the Brig Inn's aim?

The Brig Inn Community Pub & Hub was established to save Brydekirk's only pub and transform it into a thriving community-owned asset. Our vision is to create a welcoming space that combines a café, pub, community hub, small volunteer-run shop and affordable community owned housing in the upstairs 2 bed flat, ensuring the building serves local people for generations to come. The project is about much more than saving a building. We hope to tackle rural isolation, provide essential services and create opportunities for the whole community.

2. What is the community like?

Brydekirk is a small rural village in Dumfries and Galloway with around 300 residents. Like many rural communities, we've lost services over the years, including a shop, pub and church. On top of this our public transport is extremely limited. The community is very close-knit and has a strong volunteer spirit, with people of all ages coming together to support local projects and preserve what is important to the village.

3. What was the fundraising for?

The crowdfunding campaign was to help raise the remaining funds needed to purchase the Brig Inn after receiving grant funding from the Scottish Land Fund. Community donations demonstrated local support for the project and helped bridge the remaining funding gap, allowing the purchase to go ahead.

4. What platform did you use, and why?

We used Crowdfunder because it is a well-known and trusted platform with a straightforward donation process and a good reputation for supporting community projects. It was easy to share across social media and allowed supporters both locally and further afield to contribute.

5. What were the easiest and most challenging things?

The easiest part was asking our community to get behind a project they already believed in. People were incredibly supportive and wanted to see the Brig Inn saved. The most challenging part was maintaining momentum over several months. We found that interest naturally dipped after the initial launch, so it was important to keep sharing updates, celebrating milestones and organising fundraising events to keep the campaign visible.

6. What was the sales pitch?

Our message was simple: now or never! If we didn't act, the village would lose another important community asset. By bringing the Brig Inn into community ownership, we could secure it for future generations and create a place that benefits everyone. We tried fo focus on the positive impact the project would have rather than simply saving a pub.

7. How long did the campaign run for?

Our crowdfunding campaign ran from December 2025 to January 2026, however we decided to extend it as we had until the end of March to complete the purchase and keep raising funds. This gave us enough time to build awareness, hold fundraising events and encourage supporters to share the campaign with friends and family.

8. How did you link it to other sources of information?

The Crowdfunder page linked directly to our website and social media pages, where we regularly shared updates on fundraising progress, media coverage, community events and project milestones. This helped keep supporters engaged throughout the campaign. We focused on linking it to Facebook but we even tried our hand at sharing on tik tok!

9. Was there anything unique about the campaign?

Rather than relying solely on online donations, we combined the crowdfunding campaign with a wide range of community fundraising events and offline donations. Every event became an opportunity to encourage people to visit the Crowdfunder page and share the project with others. We also made big banners with QR codes to the crowdfunder page which we hung at the roads into the village and in the centre of Annan.

10. How much did the group hope to raise?

Our crowdfunding target was £30,000.

11. How much did the group actually raise?

Thanks to the incredible support of our community and supporters further afield, we exceeded our target and raised just over £40,000 through the Crowdfunder campaign and offline donations. We raised just over £21,000 directly on crowdfunder.

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

Yes. Alongside crowdfunding, we successfully secured significant grant funding, including support from the Scottish Land Fund, as well as funding from the MINSCA Fund and South of Scotland Enterprise. We also received donations from fundraising events and offline donations from individuals who struggled with donating online.

13. What was the outcome?

The crowdfunding campaign played a vital role in enabling us to complete the purchase of the Brig Inn in community ownership by end of Feb 2026. It also demonstrated overwhelming public support for the project, which has helped us secure additional funding and move on to the next stage of developing the building. We are now progressing feasibility work and planning the renovation so the Brig Inn can reopen as a community-owned pub and hub.

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Appendix 2 – Campaign Checklist

Planning your campaign (4 weeks)

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

Preparing your campaign (4 weeks)

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

Running your campaign (6 weeks)

- 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 your campaign well can secure final donations and maintain trust.

- Set a clear end date for your campaign & communicate this clearly
- Process any rewards that have been promised
- Send out regular communications on social media and email on how the project is developing