

Community ownership cold spots briefing

Introduction

Community Land Scotland, with the support of the Scottish Government, has been working to get a better understanding of Scotland’s “community land cold spots”. The process started with desk-based research and the results have informed this paper.

We researched the following areas:

- Urban – rural split
- Deprivation on an SIMD and local authority level, including child poverty levels
- Concentration of social enterprise or other community-led activity
- Social capital
- Transience / inward and outward migration

There were 612 assets owned by 422 community organisations in 2020, according to the Scottish Government’s [Community Ownership in Scotland 2020 report](#). *(This report measures ownership of assets where membership of the landowner is open to a local community with a geographical limit on members, the group has a defined aim of benefiting the local community and is non-profit making.)* The report uses Registers of Scotland data, so it only includes acquisitions that are on the Registers of Scotland by the end of 2020.

Community landownership originated in the Highlands and Islands. What these communities were able to achieve has inspired others across the country and the evidence shows that community ownership is now spreading quickly across Scotland’s rural areas.

Prior to 2016, when the Scottish Land Fund and the Community Right to Buy were extended to places with populations of over 10,000 people, community ownership existed in some urban areas but at much lower levels. Since 2016, the number of community owned assets in towns and cities has grown but uptake has been higher in some areas than others.

Choosing cold spots

Some areas are cold in terms of number of assets, others in hectares of land in community ownership. Data is available at a local authority level and Scottish local authorities vary hugely in terms of area and population, from Orkney with a population of 20,110 to Glasgow with a population of 592,820. Although not perfect, we opted to focus on the areas that had the lowest number of community assets per 100,000 population. We also included Clackmannanshire on the grounds that there is only one community owned asset in the local authority area. The cold spots and hot spots for community ownership are shown below. We have also included the hottest urban area and coldest rural area for comparison although it should be noted that around one third of people in the Stirling local authority area live in accessible rural or remote rural areas.

Coldest areas	Hottest areas	Hottest urban	Coldest rural
Falkirk	Na h-Eileanan Siar	Stirling (9 th out of 32 local authorities)	Angus (23 rd out of 32 local authorities)
Renfrewshire	Orkney Islands		
Dundee City	Shetland Islands		
East Dunbartonshire	Argyll and Bute		
City of Edinburgh	Highland		
East Renfrewshire	Moray		
Clackmannanshire*	Dumfries and Galloway		

*Included because there is only one asset in the area

What we found in the data

We examined a range of data to help us get a better understanding of why community ownership is so much lower in some areas than others. Although not all the data that would have been useful has been researched or is available, we have looked at a broad range of factors.

1. The urban factor

The community ownership movement is strongest in rural Scotland although the extension of the Scottish Land Fund and Community Right to Buy in 2016 has opened up more opportunities for communities in towns and cities. According to the Scottish Government Community Ownership in Scotland report:

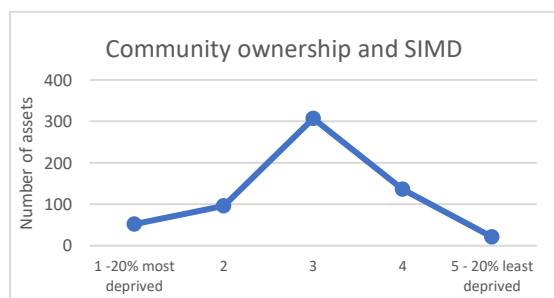
- Remote rural areas contain 6% of Scotland's population but 63% of community owned assets and 98% of community land area
- Accessible rural areas have 11% of Scotland's population, but 17.5% of assets
- Towns and other urban areas, including remote small towns, contain 83% of Scotland's population and 19.5% of community assets

More than 50% of people in every cold area, with the exception of Clackmannanshire, live in Large Urban or Other Urban areas. Every hot area has over 50% of its population in Remote Rural, Accessible Rural or Remote Small Towns.

The Scottish Governments' [Attitudes to Land Reform](#) research, published in March 2021 showed that there was lower awareness of land reform in urban areas, which may partly explain this pattern.

Community ownership and multiple deprivation

The Community Ownership in Scotland report shows that community assets are concentrated in areas that are in the middle of the SIMD range, with the 20% *least* deprived areas owning the fewest community assets.



From: *Community Ownership in Scotland 2020*

This distribution may be a reflection of the high levels of community ownership in rural areas, which tend to be more mixed, demographically. Rural communities do however score highly on deprivation in terms of Geographical Access to Services. This lack of access to services in areas is probably a driver of community ownership in rural areas.

The Scottish Government's [Asset Transfer Request evaluation](#) showed that there were considerably more asset transfer requests in the three most deprived deciles than the three most affluent. However, these high levels of interest do not seem to be translating into community ownership. The report states "Given that requests are being made to transfer assets in relatively deprived areas, this indicates a potential for a positive impact on the local services available in more deprived communities. Future evaluations, considered over longer periods with a more comprehensive set of data, may consider this further."

Community Land Scotland's [Community Ownership Hub: Glasgow and Clyde](#) Valley has worked with 64 communities in its first year, of which two thirds are in the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland.

The Scottish Government has [ranked local authorities by SIMD deciles](#). Out of 32 local authorities, our cold spots are placed as below, from most deprived to least. It is difficult to see any correlation between deprivation and community ownership when looking at a local authority level. This seems to indicate that deprivation and affluence are important factors at SIMD datazone level but not at local authority level.

Cold spots	Rank out of 32 from most deprived to least
Dundee	5th
Clackmannanshire	8th
Renfrewshire	9th
Falkirk	14th
City of Edinburgh	22nd
East Dunbartonshire	24th
East Renfrewshire	28th

Social enterprise and community activity

There is a strong correlation between community ownership and concentration of social enterprises / wider community activity. We looked at the [Social Enterprise Census 2019](#) and were also able to access some early figures from the Scottish Community Alliance (SCA) census, which is being carried out by the Community Woodlands Association. The SCA is a coalition of national community-based networks and the census is a count of its members' members. The table below shows the cold and hot spots for community ownership, social enterprises and SCA groups. A strong correlation can be seen for hot and cold spots across the three categories, with the exception of Edinburgh, which is something of an outlier.

Coldest areas	Community assets/ 100,000 people	Social enterprise / 10,000 people	SCA groups / 100,000 people
Falkirk	n/a	60	12
Renfrewshire	0.56	60	18
Dundee City	0.67	90	13
East Dunbartonshire	0.92	60	16
City of Edinburgh	0.95	150	22
East Renfrewshire	1	60	10
Clackmannanshire	2	70	31
Hottest areas			
Na h-Eileanan Siar	230	450	226
Orkney Islands	135	310	129
Shetland	109	470	74
Argyll and Bute	104	290	135
Highland	62	240	96
Moray	40	160	43
D&G	27	160	58
Hottest urban			
Stirling	15	170	39
Coldest rural			
Angus	2.5	100	28

Other factors we investigated

Social capital We looked at the [Social Capital in Scotland report](#). Data is not provided by local authority area. The evidence shows that rural areas have higher social capital than urban areas. For example, in the Scottish Household Survey, only 51% of people in Other Urban Areas agree that: *“this is a neighbourhood where local people take action to help improve the neighbourhood”* whereas in Remote Rural areas, this figure is 73%. It looks as though there may be a correlation between social capital and community ownership, but it would be useful to have more data.

Child poverty Using figures published by the Child Poverty Coalition, we could find no correlation between child poverty at a local authority level and levels of community ownership, with levels of child poverty equally high in both hot and cold spots for community ownership

Migration / transience Using figures provided by the National Records of Scotland, we could find no correlation between in or out migration to local authority areas and levels of community ownership

March 2022