**Re-writing the Rulebook of Landownership**

**Argyll and Bute community roundtable, Oban, 16 May 2016**

The project hosted the second of its series of three community roundtables, in Oban, for community landowners and development trusts in the Argyll and Bute region. The purpose of the roundtables is to bring together a cross-section of community landowners and through loosely directed questioning, collect their experiences and ideas about how outcomes from community owned land might best be appraised.

We had a great range of community landowners around the table, and the feedback we got suggested that it was a valuable opportunity to bring together community landowners who do not get regular chances to meet up and discuss strategic issues that often. Unlike in the Western Isles, where c. 80% of all land is now in community hands, community owners in Argyll and Bute are few and far between and scattered over a large geographical area. As such, many of the issues raised were also quite different.

We were delighted to welcome to the roundtable:

* Helen Macdonald – Mull & Iona Community Trust: <http://www.mict.co.uk>
* James Waugh, and Kevin Smith, Ballachulish Community Company: <http://www.ballachulish.org.uk/2014/07/ballachulish-community-company/>
* Ian Hepburn, North West Mull Community Woodland: <http://nwmullwoodland.co.uk>
* Fergus Waters, Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust: <http://www.gigha.org.uk>

**Highland community roundtable, Inverness, 7 June 2016**

The last of our three community roundtables was held in Inverness in early June 2016, hosted by the Highland Archive Centre. This roundtable covered a huge region, and we had a really interesting range of owners and stakeholders attending, giving us a broad range of issues to think about as we plan our final event, the conference in Inverness in September.

We were delighted to welcome to the roundtable:

* Amanda Bryan, chair of Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust: <http://www.isleofeigg.net/eigg_heritage_trust.html>
* Dr John Watt, chair of the Scottish Land Fund: <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/scottishlandfund>
* Sarah Compton-Bishop, company secretary, Isle of Jura Development Trust: <http://www.juradevelopment.co.uk>
* Adrian Watt, Evanton Wood Community Company: <http://www.evantonwood.com>
* Joanna Wawrzyczek, Helmsdale & District Development Trust: <http://www.helmsdale.org/hddg.php>
* Jasmine Chorley, Highlands and Islands Enterprise: <http://www.hie.co.uk>
* Gordon Robertson, Assynt Foundation: <http://www.assyntfoundation.org>
* Angus Hardie, director of the Scottish Community Alliance: <http://www.scottishcommunityalliance.org.uk/about/>

In order to ensure parity across the roundtables, the project team agreed a set of 10 questions beforehand that were covered in each of the three events. We tried to keep them fairly broad, and due to local circumstances and histories, each roundtable responded quite differently. Here are the questions we asked:

1. Has community buyout been successful?
2. How do you define success and has this definition changed over time?
3. Does this align with wider public and political understandings of economic success or stability in your experience? Do you think you regard success in different ways to what might be regarded as normal business? If so, in what ways?
4. What have been the most important factors in your economic stability/growth?

5. Assuming the necessary income, what do you see as your expenditure priorities? Jobs? Housing? Other?

6. What factors would most improve your economic stability/growth?

7. How far do social and cultural success/improvements sit alongside economic stability – that is, which are more important to your organisation?

8. How/if do your governance structures/organisations affect how you make economic decisions or plans?

9. Do you see yourself as a business organisation with social goals, or an organisation with social goals that uses business to achieve them?

10. Finally, do you feel that there’s sufficient understanding of what you’re about on the part of government, local authorities, government agencies, the media and the wider public? If not, what might be done to improve such understanding?

In each of our three regions, we received quite different answers to these questions, and it was clear that different opportunities and obstacles exist for community landowners in the different regions. It was also clear that as a rapidly expanding and changing sector, the requirement for rigorous appraisal and understanding was ever more necessary, not least because of the different challenges presented at different stages – from initial buy-out to the ten or twenty year anniversary points for landowners.

Now that we have completed the three regional roundtables and the eight in-depth interviews, we are busy drafting out our criteria document, ready for discussion and workshopping at our final gathering, in Inverness on Friday 9 September 2016.