

Community ownership will help create affordable housing in rural areas

by [John Ross](#) April 1, 2021

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View of Suilven from site of land buy out in Lochinver

Much-needed affordable homes are to be built for local people in two rural locations after the community owners secured land deals.

The Assynt Development Trust has bought 55 acres of former glebe land in Lochinver from the Church of Scotland with the site earmarked to bring multiple community benefits.

The Applecross Community Company has also finalised a buy-out of 5.6 acres which will be used to help tackle a local housing shortage.

The purchase of the Lochinver site, which has a view towards the mountain Suilven, marks the next step of a 15-year project to identify and

develop suitable land for building affordable homes.

The community will hold further consultation on possible additional uses for the land, with initial ideas including an all-abilities path network, commercial work units and education and training facilities.

The Scottish Land Fund [provided £65,750 towards the land purchase](#) and Communities Housing Trust supported the community with the land acquisition and will continue to help the development process.

Need for affordable homes

Willie Jack, chairman of Assynt Development Trust, said: “We are really pleased that the land purchase has now gone through, and we can now begin to address some of the issues facing our community, such as the need for affordable homes for Assynt residents.

“We are very keen that people have a chance to pitch their ideas in, for what they need and want in Lochinver. As everything is still at an early stage, and with the site secured, we can work on developing the site into what local people want for it, now and into the future.”

Ronnie MacRae, CEO of [Communities Housing Trust](#), said: “This is an exciting opportunity to provide not just affordable housing, but wider social and economic community benefits too.

“This community-led, mixed development model is often so much more suited to smaller, more rural communities and we are extremely pleased to continue working with the Trust and the wider community to further develop the site. We’d like to thank the Scottish Land Fund and congratulate the community on the buyout, and recognise all the hard work that’s been put in to get to this stage.”

Meanwhile, the Communities Housing Trust also helped with work to secure land at the Hydro Field and Community Gardens by the Applecross Community Company.



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Site of future affordable housing in Applecross

Last year the land deal was [awarded £151,500](#) from the [Scottish Land Fund](#) to buy 5.6 acres for housing and business units.

The group said the project will help alleviate the housing shortage in the 225-strong Wester Ross community and help retain a viable population as well as its school, nursery, GP surgery, shop and post office.

The eight new homes and two business units will add to three affordable houses being built in Applecross with completion due by November.

Work will continue to develop eight allotments and a community garden and to investigate an electric vehicle and e-bike charging point, powered by the community-owned hydro station, Apple Juice, as well as a communal space, polytunnel and composting facilities.

A further award of £137,252 from the land fund will allow the community company to purchase, restock and improve Togarve Community Woods.

Local development officer Roslyn Clarke said: "It's wonderful that we've this milestone. Land ownership is incredible for our community as it gives

control over our future and all the benefits that come from that.”