

## Introduction

This briefing is the second output of an 18-month evaluation of the implementation of Asset Transfer Requests (ATRs) commissioned by the Scottish Government and being conducted by researchers at Glasgow Caledonian University. It summarises ATR activity across Scotland using the data from annual reporting that all Relevant Authorities (RAs) referred to in Part 5 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (the Act) were required to publish by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019 and covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. In addition to the collection of the annual reporting data, the documents related to ATRs were accessed through RA websites. Relevant documents included application forms, business plans and decision notices. Accessing this information has allowed for some analysis of the purpose of the request and the location of the assets requested.

Part 5 of the Act introduces Asset Transfer Requests (ATRs) which gives Community Transfer Bodies (CTB) the right to request to buy, lease assets or conferral of other rights such as access, management or a licence to occupy, from RAs to achieve community and public benefits. The Guidance document for RAs<sup>1</sup> (2017) states that 'ownership or control of land and buildings is a powerful tool for communities to drive change and achieve their own goals' (2017: 1) and the legislation within the Act shifts the balance of power.

## Key findings

As at 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2019, annual reporting information was not readily available for all RAs. The type, format, amount and quality of data varied considerably. The lack of data and inconsistency in reporting means that there are limits to the conclusions that can be drawn at this stage.

- Across the RAs for which information was accessible, there were 81 ATRs received, 48 agreed and six refused. Of the 81 applications, 64 were received by local authorities.
- Using data from application forms it was possible to find information about the rights that were requested. From the available data there were 40 applications for ownership of an asset, 20 applications for lease and no applications for conferral of rights related to an asset.
- There were 22 applications for buildings, 21 for land and 16 applications for both land and buildings.
- From the data available there are high numbers of applications for assets for the purpose of running community hubs (n=17), community parks/woodlands/gardens (n=12) and sports/recreational facilities (n=11). There has been consistent interest in assets for these purposes across both periods. Other purposes include renovation of public toilets (n=2), heritage/tourism (n=4), organisation programme delivery (n=7 and men's/community shed (n=2). A new purpose which emerged in the 2018/19 reports is affordable housing (n=3).
- RAs reported their support and promotion activity which included the publication of an asset register, information online and the designation of a first point of contact. Some RAs also outlined plans for reviews and consultation in relation to the ATR policies and processes in order to ensure accountability and transparency.
- Within the annual reports there were no references to inequalities in RAs approaches to promotion and support of ATR. However, this does not mean that there is not specific work being carried out in relation to supporting marginalised communities to submit ATRs. In line with the guidance, some reports made reference

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<sup>1</sup> <https://beta.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/guidance/2017/01/asset-transfer-under-community-empowerment-scotland-act-2015-guidance-relevant-9781786527493/documents/00513197-pdf/00513197-pdf/govscot:document/>

to the ATR assessment criteria which includes consideration of whether the request is likely to reduce inequalities of outcome.

- By mapping the postcodes of the assets that were requested onto Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation<sup>2</sup> (SIMD) data it is possible to see a spread of requests across areas of differing SIMD level and there is no indication of a concentration in the areas of least deprivation. This indicates a potential for a positive impact on the local services available in more deprived communities.

## **Next steps**

Over the coming months Glasgow Caledonian University researchers will be completing the analysis of the qualitative data that has been generated from interviews and participant observation with a number of case study RAs and community groups from across Scotland.

The final report will address the following research questions:

1. Whether, how, and to what extent, is Part 5 of the Act being implemented as intended in the legislation and guidance?
2. To what extent does implementation of Part 5 of the Act result in more asset transfers being initiated and assets being transferred to community ownership, control and use, and with what potential contribution to improved access to transferred services and facilities?
3. What is the pattern of take up and use of Part 5 of the Act among different community groups? What are the potential implications of these patterns for local inequalities of outcomes?
4. Whether, how, and to what extent do communities feel more empowered as a result of the availability, take up and use of Part 5 of the Act?

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<sup>2</sup> SIMD uses data related to employment, health, education, housing, access and crime to in order to rank small geographical areas from most, to least deprived.