

Scottish Land Fund

Ionmhas Fearainn Na H-Alba

Embargo – 10.00am Friday, 22 February 2013

Scottish Land Fund Grants Awarded

A community in **Wester Ross** is one of four today (FRI 22 FEB) taking control of their future, thanks to the new Scottish Land Fund, as the first grants are announced.

Launched last year, the £6 million Scottish Land Fund is funded by the Scottish Government and delivered by the Big Lottery Fund in partnership with Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Today's awards, of over £3/4 million, in Wester Ross, Cowal, Moray Firth, and the Borders means these four communities can now purchase land and assets ensuring they are able to shape their own brighter future.

Scottish Land Fund Committee Chair, John Watt, said: "We know from experience that communities can achieve great things when they own and manage local land and land assets. So I am delighted to announce this first round of funding to these three projects and look forward to seeing them develop. Land ownership helps build independent, resilient and confident communities which benefits, not only themselves, but the country as a whole. The Scottish Land Fund, with funding over three years, aims to empower more rural communities, giving them the tools and resources they need so they can achieve their plans of local sustainability."

Richard Lochhead, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs & Environment said, "I am delighted that the Scottish Land Fund is empowering four of our rural communities in Moray Firth, Cowal, Wester Ross and the Borders to take control of their own future by helping them to acquire land and community assets. These innovative and diverse projects will bring clear long term benefits, making each community stronger, resilient and more sustainable. I would urge other communities to look at these projects – three of which are achieved through the community right to buy provisions and the National Forest Land Scheme – to see



how community land ownership and funding from the Scottish Land Fund can make a real difference to them.”

Achiltibuie is a remote crofting and fishing community in the Coigach area of Wester Ross. Thanks to today's Scottish Land Grant of **£160,700** the **Coigach Community Development Company** can purchase **Achiltibuie Smokehouse** land and buildings and ensure community control of any future development. Ownership of the land and building presents significant potential business growth and employment opportunities for the area. Plans have still to be finalised but it is envisaged that the site will be designed to provide a flexible space accommodating food and tourism industries.

Ian Muir, Chairman, Coigach Community Development Company, said, “This is great news. This time last year we learned that our biggest employer and tourist attraction, Summer Isle Foods, was moving to Alness and, with all these jobs going, things looked gloomy. A year on and, thanks to this funding, we can complete the purchase of the smokehouse they vacated. It's a very exciting time for us all and we look forward to establishing a vibrant new business to bring employment to the community.”

Alex Paterson, Chief Executive of Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), which is delivering the Scottish Land Fund in partnership with the Big Lottery Fund, said: "Highlands and Islands Enterprise is delighted to be playing a part in delivering the Scottish Land Fund, along with our colleagues in Big Lottery Fund Scotland. These first four grants, each for very different projects, will empower these community groups and help them to determine their own futures. This announcement is only the beginning of the journey for these groups and for the Land Fund itself.”

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Notes to Editors

- The Scottish Land Fund has £6 million over three years to assist communities in rural Scotland to acquire, develop and manage local land and land assets. The programme is funded by the Scottish Government and delivered in partnership by the Big Lottery Fund and Highlands and Islands enterprise, both of which have extensive experience of helping communities to acquire and develop their assets for over a decade.

- The SLF Committee was appointed following the normal procedures for public appointments. Committee members are non remunerated.
- The BIG Lottery Fund distributes lottery funding to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK. It also uses its expertise in grant-giving to distribute non-Lottery funding. Full details of the BIG Lottery Fund programmes and grant awards are available on the website: <http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk>. BIG Lottery Fund Public Enquiries Line call: 0300 123 7110
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) delivers the Scottish Government Economic Strategy across more than half of Scotland - from Shetland to Argyll and from the Hebrides to Moray. It aims to support businesses and social enterprises; strengthen communities and fragile areas; develop key sectors, and create the conditions for a competitive and low carbon region. HIE has an annual budget of more than £75m and employs around 250 people in locations around the Highlands and Islands. See more at www.hie.co.uk

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