

Connections make communities



The National Lottery Community Fund's role in local infrastructure funding

Executive summary

- This report explores the difference the National Lottery Community Fund makes to people's lives and local areas through community infrastructure. This includes buildings like village halls and community centres, businesses like community-owned pubs and shops, and community-owned assets like housing developments and power generators.
- Over the past five years, we have directly awarded **£650 million** in this area, as well as **£394 million** since 2012 through major trusts, and **£198 million** since 2006 through focused programmes. This includes funding from National Lottery proceeds, and government and third-party sources.

Providing jobs and boosting local economies

- We support community enterprises because they work to improve local areas, reinvesting profits into the community and providing jobs while addressing gaps in private sector and local authority provision.
- This includes an investment of £149 million to create Power to Change, a trust that has supported **1,282 community businesses** in its first five years, with the majority of the funding going to the 30% most deprived parts of England. Our funding through the trust has also supported the construction or acquisition of **889 community-owned homes**, the investment of **£40 million** into community energy, and a **near-tripling** of the number of community-owned pubs.
- Recognising the negative impact of Covid-19 on community enterprises, we provided emergency funding for **302** community-led businesses, helping them to keep running and provide essential services during the pandemic.

Facilitating community ownership

- Community ownership of local infrastructure ensures that key assets aren't lost, while addressing local needs and building community resilience in the face of economic shifts. We've helped communities acquire **589 assets** that matter to them, including energy stations, village halls and housing developments.
- Through Scottish Government funding, we put **83,829 acres of land** into community ownership via the 2012-2016 round of the Scottish Land Fund. The Community Asset Transfer programme in Wales awarded £20 million to help **38 communities** across Wales take on and develop their local infrastructure.

- Through Big Local and Invest Local, we've given residents of **163 different areas** in England and Wales control of how their communities are developed over the next 10-15 years, with an investment of £1 million per area. For example, in response to the closure of a local leisure centre, locals in Plas Madoc launched a community trust, took on the lease of the building, and now run the centre for the community's benefit. It has a turnover of £850,000, provides work for 15 volunteers and 44 employees, and was named Welsh Social Enterprise of the Year at the 2018 Social Business Wales Awards.

Improving accessibility and harnessing diversity

- Community infrastructure needs to do more than just simply exist; it must be accessible for the whole community and inviting to a diverse range of community members. Through small adjustments and improvements, local spaces become shared community hubs, while bigger renovations allow old and outdated structures become relevant to a wider range of people.
- We've awarded over £565 million to fund almost **10,000 building work and renovation projects** over the past five years, helping to make places and spaces more sustainable, accessible, comfortable and welcoming. We've supported nearly **900 accessibility infrastructure projects**, using £86 million of National Lottery and third-party proceeds to fund lifts, ramps and accessible toilets, among other improvements, so that people from all backgrounds can use their local facilities.
- Through specialist programmes, we've also helped address specific needs – the Energy Efficient Venues programme in Northern Ireland, for example, saw **403 community organisations** supported to carry out energy efficiency and environmental improvements through £6.9 million in funding.

Combatting isolation and bringing people together

- Our support to the voluntary and community sector helps community infrastructure achieve its core function of bringing people together, providing access to opportunities and encouraging interaction. This builds social capital by improving trust, local pride and social cohesion, leading to strong, connected communities.
- Village halls and community centres are the most recognisable examples and sources of this approach, and we have supported over **1,500** of these in England and Wales over the past five years, awarding £119 million in funding to support an average of **four spaces per local authority** at an average of £75,000 in capital costs and £217,000 in revenue costs for each local authority area.
- In Northern Ireland, **9,800 people** took part in activities and events run through our Space and Place programme. Of these, **83% reported improved health and wellbeing** and **757 increased their use of community green spaces**. For people using services put into community ownership through Growing Community Assets in Scotland, **49% made new friends**, **19% improved their fitness** and **17% developed new skills**.