

East Dunbartonshire – Response to the Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Bill call for views 2025

1. Name
2. Organisation

1. The Scottish Government's objective is to ensure consistent implementation of Community Wealth Building across Scotland.

(a) Do you think the proposed Bill will achieve this objective?

EDC Response:

The proposed Bill has the potential to significantly advance the consistent implementation of Community Wealth Building (CWB) across Scotland by establishing a statutory framework that formally recognises and supports CWB as a strategic approach within local and regional economic development. This shift is welcome, especially since economic development has not previously been a statutory function for local authorities. By creating a duty on public bodies to develop and implement CWB action plans, the Bill sets a clearer direction for how local economic policy and investment can be shaped to retain and recirculate wealth within communities.

A key positive aspect of the Bill is its flexibility. While it introduces the duty for CWB action plan, it does not prescribe a uniform template, which allows local authorities and relevant public bodies to work together to tailor CWB action plans to reflect local needs, priorities and opportunities. Likewise, it provides the option for Local Authorities to work together to create regional action plans, which is important given the diversity of contexts and capacities across Scotland.

However, while the introduction of a duty and flexibility for implementation is considered positive, there is a significant concern regarding the implications of implementation of this new duty in terms of resources and technical capacities. The Bill does not outline how local authorities, and public bodies will be supported to meet new obligations - particularly those authorities that are still in the early stages of their CWB journeys. The successful implementation of the Bill will depend on the availability of resources and support. Councils will require adequate financial and human resources to deliver on the statutory duties, develop institutional capacity, and engage effectively with local partners and communities. Without this, there is a risk that some authorities will struggle to move beyond high-level commitments toward meaningful change.

Furthermore, guidance issued under the Bill must help local authorities recognise how existing activities already contribute to CWB, and what additional changes could be made to redirect existing efforts and avoid the perception that working on CWB is an additional burden. Effective engagement, communication, training, and ongoing support for those involved is considered essential to achieve effective implementation.

In summary, the proposed Bill provides a welcome framework to support consistent and strategic implementation of CWB across Scotland. However, its success will depend heavily on the provision of adequate resources, the quality of national guidance, and ongoing support to build capacity, particularly in areas still developing their institutional foundations for CWB.

(b) Does the Scottish Government need to change the law to achieve this objective?

Yes/No

EDC Response:

Yes.

While CWB principles can be implemented without legislative change, introducing a statutory duty is considered a positive step. The adoption of this legislation would provide a legal platform to support a more inclusive, community-focused approach to economic development, traditionally a non-statutory function for local authorities. This could significantly contribute to ensuring that communities and local impacts are prioritised in policy and decision-making processes.

(c) Are there other ways in which the Scottish Government could achieve this objective?

EDC Response:

Yes. In addition to legislation, several supportive, non-statutory measures could strengthen the consistent implementation CWB across Scotland.

The existing CWB Practitioners' Network has already proven valuable in facilitating knowledge exchange, peer learning and shared practice among local authorities, public bodies, and anchor institutions. It plays an important role in fostering collaboration and building understanding of CWB principles. This network should not only be maintained but strengthened and expanded to provide ongoing support, facilitate benchmarking, and share case studies and guidance on implementing the five pillars of CWB.

It would also be helpful to create a central online CWB hub that brings together the wide range of existing resources into a single, visible platform. This could support both implementation and performance monitoring by offering suggested indicators and examples of effective delivery across each of the five pillars.

Additionally, the Scottish Government could provide targeted funding to support areas at earlier stages of their CWB journey or facing complex local economic challenges. This would help address capacity gaps and ensure all areas can create and implement their action plans.

2. The Bill would place extra duties on some public sector organisations. Are these duties proportionate? Do these organisations have the capacity and resources to meet the duties placed on them?

EDC Response:

The proposed duties are deemed positive in terms of ambition, aiming to embed CWB more consistently across Scotland, by creating the requirement of a CWB action plan. However, their implementation may present challenges across local areas, depending on existing capacity, resources, and progress made to date. Not all local authorities and public bodies involved start from the same point, and tailored support will be particularly important for those at the early stages of implementation.

In East Dunbartonshire, for example, the Council and its Partners are still in the early stages of developing a local CWB approach. Steps have been taken to align with the CWB agenda at a regional level through the Glasgow City Region Economic Strategy. At local level the approach has been explored in key local policies including the Economic Recovery Plan (2021) and the Circular Economy Strategy (2023). The Council is currently preparing a new Economic Development Strategy that aims to embed CWB as a guiding principle. However, the local structures and institutional capacity are not yet fully developed to implement a stand-alone CWB strategy with the same level of ambition as in some other areas.

This is particularly pressing when viewed against the Bill's accompanying financial memorandum, which estimates the need for a dedicated full-time CWB lead officer, supported by five additional officers working part-time on the agenda. At present, such institutional arrangement does not exist in East Dunbartonshire, and **introducing these roles without additional funding from the Scottish Government would not be possible given the wider financial constraints currently facing local government.**

To deliver effectively, local authorities will need dedicated financial and human resources, as well as clear, practical guidance on how existing activities align with the CWB pillars. Officers and local stakeholders involved will require targeted training and support to understand how CWB relates to ongoing work and what kind of activities could be implemented to align with the requirements of the new legislation.

3. Do you agree with the list of 'relevant public bodies' proposed in the Bill? If not, how should these be changed?

Alongside local authorities, 'relevant public bodies' would be required to publish and implement a CWB action plan.

The proposed relevant public bodies are:

- *Colleges*
- *Health Boards*
- *Scottish Enterprise*
- *South of Scotland Enterprise*
- *Highlands and Islands Enterprise*
- *Skills Development Scotland*
- *Regional Transport Partnerships*

EDC Response:

The proposed list of 'relevant public bodies' is considered sensible; however, it does not necessarily reflect the way CWB is being progressed in local areas. In practice, much of the relevant collaboration already happens through existing governance structures such as Community Planning Partnerships and Economic Development Partnerships. The listed

public bodies are not uniformly engaged or active in these structures across all local authority areas, and some of the national or regional bodies listed may have limited operational presence locally. This variation could impact on consistent implementation and create challenges in establishing new and efficient working relationships.

Establishing a separate, additional CWB-specific partnership could be resource-intensive and difficult to sustain. Instead, it is considered that aligning responsibilities created by the Bill with existing partnerships could be a more efficient approach to support integration with current strategic planning and delivery mechanisms.

Furthermore, to reflect the collaborative and place-based nature of CWB, it would be important recognise the vital roles of the private sector, third sector, and community stakeholders. While new statutory duties may not be needed, other provisions could be made to strengthen engagement beyond the public sector in the co-creation of CWB action plans.

4. Are there any ways the law in devolved areas could be changed to facilitate Community Wealth Building that are currently not proposed in the Bill?

EDC Response:

Yes. While the Bill offers an important foundation, fully realising the ambitions of Community Wealth Building will require stronger alignment with other devolved legislation. Each of the five CWB pillars interacts with existing legal frameworks, for example: procurement law, land use regulation, fair work policies, and finance legislation.

Greater impact could be achieved by linking CWB with other statutory duties and strategies. Aligning CWB with existing obligations around sustainable procurement, participatory budgeting, fair work, climate targets, the circular economy, planning policy, and wellbeing outcomes, for example, would promote coherence and avoid duplication. Cross-referencing these areas within the Bill or supporting guidance would help mainstream CWB and provide clearer expectations for public bodies.

This integrated approach would support local authorities in identifying how current statutory responsibilities can contribute to CWB aims, reducing the perception that it is a new or separate obligation.

5. Are there any potential unintended consequences to the proposed Bill?

EDC Response:

While the flexibility offered by the Bill is a positive characteristic, it also presents challenges. The bill does not introduce proportionate mechanisms for benchmarking, monitoring, and measuring impact. This could create a challenge in the scale and effectiveness of implementation, limit opportunities for learning and improvement and make it harder to assess progress or ensure accountability.

To best ensure accountability and consistent implementation, the Scottish Government could commission a formal review a few years after the Bill's introduction. This would provide a structured opportunity to assess how each local authority and public body is progressing in delivering CWB, identify good practice, and highlight areas needing further support or

refinement. It would be crucial that this review is proportionate to the levels of implementation, capacities and governance structures across local authorities.

There is also a potential risk that in consideration of the current financial challenges - some authorities might opt to develop regional rather than local action plans, which could lead to local priorities being diluted or overlooked, particularly in areas where local structures are still developing. Ensuring that local voices remain central to any regional approach will be key to delivering the core aim of CWB.

A further potential unintended consequence is related to the local spending pillar of CWB. While the adoption of the Bill would provide a stronger platform to support and maximise community opportunities through procurement -by promoting higher levels of spend with SMEs, micro-businesses and inclusive business models- its implementation could add pressure on local capacities and conflict with existing procurement regulations.

Local authorities and other public bodies already play an enabling role for SMEs by supporting them to be able to bid for contracts and by using Quick Quote systems for smaller value contracts; however, there is a pressing need to balance this approach in consideration of tight budgets, while promoting economies of scale, and maintaining quality standards. Delivering the bill within existing regulations may add pressure in terms of the resources required to be able to manage multiple contracts if authorities need to breakup one larger contract into several smaller opportunities for SMEs.

To address this challenge, the Scottish Government could provide tailored support and advice on including CWB within current procurement regulations and review existing legislation regarding the aggregation rules around contracts, making it simpler for small and micro businesses to become suppliers for a portion of a larger contract. Furthermore, the Scottish Government value threshold for tendering could be increased to facilitate wider use of Quick Quote and therefore opportunities to procure from small local businesses. This could help to build capacity in East Dunbartonshire and similar local authority areas where the local business base is mostly comprised of micro-sized enterprises.

6. To what extent will small businesses benefit from this Bill?

Small businesses could benefit considerably from the Bill, especially in areas like East Dunbartonshire where many businesses are SMEs operating within the Foundational Economy. By promoting local procurement, inclusive employment, and community-based development, CWB can create more accessible opportunities for small enterprises to benefit from the retention of wealth in the local economy.

However, the accomplishment of these benefits will depend on the existence of capacities to promote coordination among partners, provide targeted support, and the development of clear, deliverable action plans. As mentioned earlier in the questionnaire, additional support is needed so that local authorities have the institutional capacities to ensure the needs and contributions of SMEs are actively considered and supported throughout CWB planning and implementation.

To increase involvement of the private sector, the Scottish Government could investigate how it can incentivise businesses to take part in CWB at local level. For example, spreading awareness of CWB within the business community and encouraging networking. An additional area of opportunity would be to explore incentives that could be offered to

businesses setting up inclusive ownership models, while providing tailored advice and support for the more complex aspects of such models. The Scottish Government could work with the UK Government to study whether tax rules could be simplified to incentivise employee ownership models vs shareholder models, particularly where employees may have concerns about facing additional tax burdens.

7. To what extent will local community organisations benefit from this Bill?

The Bill's focus on community-led economic development provides an opportunity for communities to contribute to shaping local economies in ways that better reflect their needs and aspirations.

In a place like East Dunbartonshire - where challenges include an ageing population, dependence on low-paid foundational economy sectors, and income disparities between those who work locally and those who commute- CWB offers a valuable framework to retain wealth locally and improve outcomes, particularly benefitting vulnerable groups. Community groups and third sector organisations acting in the area, given their established local relationships and understanding of place are central to the success of CWB and stand to benefit significantly from its implementation.

To fully realise these benefits, the Scottish Government should ensure that appropriate tools, funding, and capacity-building support are in place to enable community groups to participate meaningfully. A clear, accessible communications strategy will also be key to helping communities understand, engage with, and support the aims of CWB.