



# Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015



The Community Empowerment Bill became an Act on 24 July 2015.

The Act gives more power to the community groups to do more for themselves and have more say in decisions that affect them.



## What does this mean for me and my Community?

- The Act gives you more say in how public services are planned and provided, like health services, police, roads, social work, housing and transport.
- The Act gives more powers to own or rent estates, land or buildings.
- The Act lets community groups become more involved in improving **outcomes** of services.



An **outcome** is the change that happens because of what organisations do, for example an increase in exercise that happens because a community park is built.



**There are 11 parts to the Act.**



**Part 1**

**National Outcomes**

Scottish ministers set goals for what we want Scotland to be like. They will need to talk to communities about these goals and report on how they are doing every 5 years.



**Part 2**

**Community Planning**

Community Planning Partnerships involve local organisations (like West Lothian Council, Police, Fire, NHS, Colleges, Jobcentre, Voluntary Sector Gateway). These partners need to work together and with local communities to improve services and make life better for people.

	<p>Community Planning Partnerships have to prepare a document called the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan. This will include the outcomes that are most important and how improvements will be made. Community groups must be involved when developing this Plan.</p>
	<p>Community Planning Partnerships also have to prepare Locality Plans for smaller areas in West Lothian. In West Lothian there will be 8 plans written with the community.</p>
	<p>If you have any questions on Community Planning you can contact <a href="mailto:community.planning@westlothian.gov.uk">community.planning@westlothian.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Telephone: 01506 281086</p>



## Part 3

### **Participation Requests**

Community groups can now ask to work with local public organisations when they have an idea of how to make a service better. The organisation has to listen to the idea and talk to the group about how it might work.

This part of the Act came in on 1st April 2017.



If you are interested in finding out more about participation requests you can contact [community.planning@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:community.planning@westlothian.gov.uk)



**OR**

Telephone: 01506 281086



## Part 4

### **Community Rights to Buy Land**

This law now applies to communities right across West Lothian. This means that if an owner of land or a building decides to sell, they have to sell it to any community group that can afford to pay. This is if Scottish Ministers agree. Community groups must show that they have enough support from the rest of the community.



They can also buy land that is “Abandoned, Neglected or Detrimental” where the seller doesn’t want to sell. This is land that is left alone by the owner and is messy and might cause problems for other people.



## Part 5

### **Asset Transfer Requests**

Community groups can now ask to buy, rent or take over any land or buildings (also called assets) owned or rented by public





organisations. There are rules around who can make a request and what information needs to be given to the organisation.

Public organisations must keep a list of assets that they own or rent and must publish an annual report saying where they have transferred assets. This part of the Act came in on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2017.

If you want to find out more about asset transfer requests you can contact [scott.hughes@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:scott.hughes@westlothian.gov.uk)



## **Part 6**

### **Delegation of Forestry Commissioners Functions**

The Act allows for different types of community groups to be involved in renting parts of forests. You can find out more on the Forestry Commission Scotland website:

[www.scotland.forestry.gov.uk/managing/get-involved/community-asset-transfer-scheme](http://www.scotland.forestry.gov.uk/managing/get-involved/community-asset-transfer-scheme)



## Part 7

### Football Clubs

This part of the Act lets Scottish Ministers make rules to make sure fans have a say in the football clubs they support. Ministers have not decided when this part will become live.



## Part 8

### Common Good Property

‘Common good property’ is the land, buildings, art and other things that local councils have been given to help local people. The council will now be asked to publish a list of common good property in West Lothian and to make sure that community groups are asked about any changes. The Scottish Government is working on guidance around this.



## Part 9

### Allotments

This part of the Act makes the law about allotments easier to understand and tells councils how waiting lists should be managed. They must also develop a paper saying how that will help more people to have land to grow their own food and publish an annual report on their allotments. Ministers have not decided when this will become live.



## Part 10

### Participation in Public Decision Making

This part of the Act lets Scottish Ministers ask public services to let the public get involved in some types of decisions and activities.

Ministers haven't said exactly what this will mean yet.



## Part 11

### **Non-Domestic Rates**

Shops, offices, pubs, warehouses, factories, etc, have to pay something called “business rates”. This part of the Act means that councils can give discounts on these rates.



### **Where can I find out more information about the Community Empowerment Act?**

Email the Community Planning team: [community.planning@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:community.planning@westlothian.gov.uk) or call us on 01506 281086.

Information is also available on the West Lothian Community Planning Partnership website:

<https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/16160/Community-Empowerment>



The full Act is available at:

[www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2015/6/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2015/6/contents)

The explanatory notes can be downloaded from:

[www.legislation.gov.uk/2015/notes/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/2015/notes/contents)