



COMMUNITY*
LAND SCOTLAND

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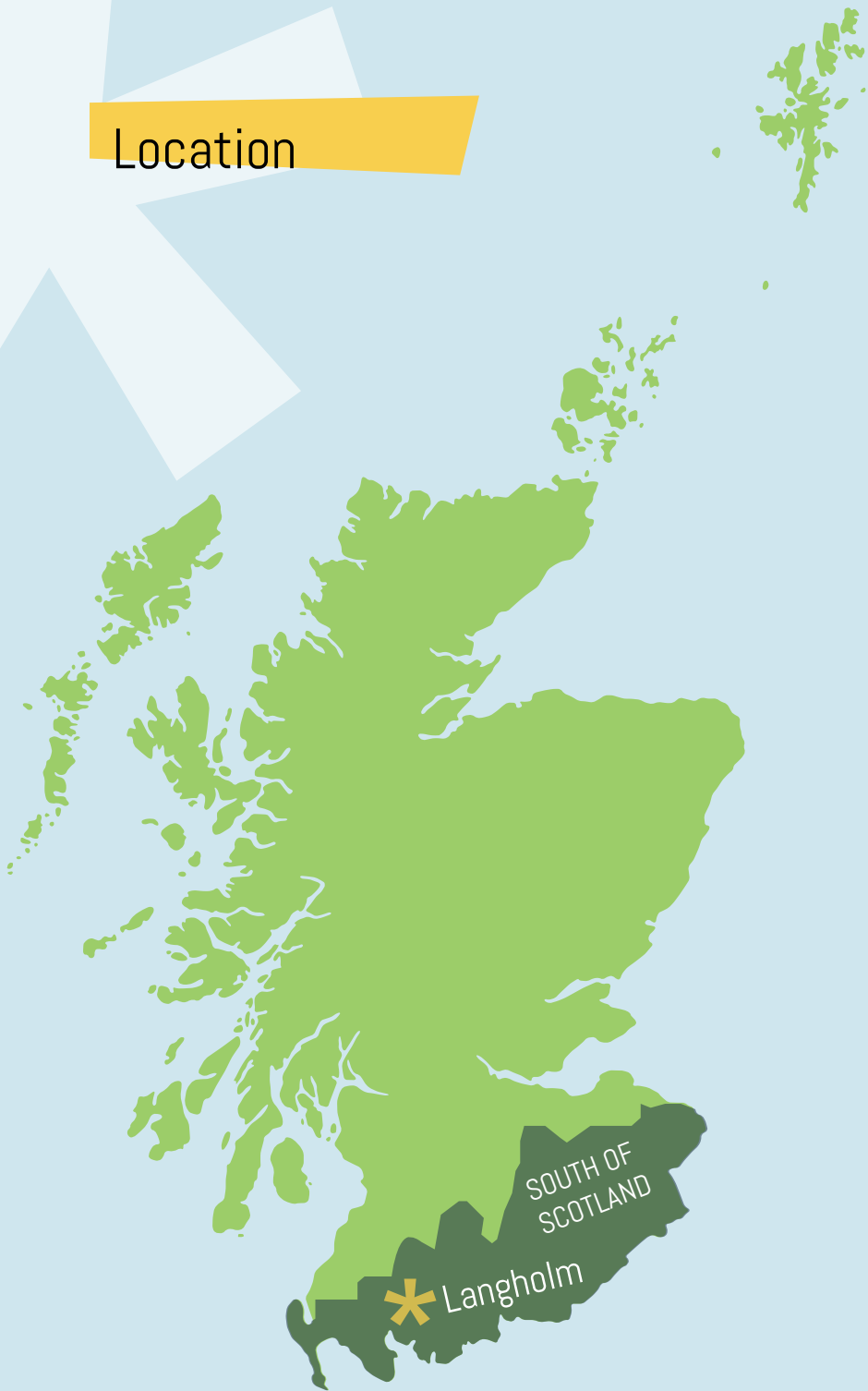
Case study:

LANGHOLM



Community Ownership Thriving in the South of Scotland

Location



Langholm Facts

- Langholm is referred to locally as 'Muckle Toon' which is a Scots expression meaning 'large town'.
- Poet Hugh MacDiarmid was born in Langholm in 1892, a cast iron memorial depicting images from his writings stands on the Moor above Langholm.
- Due to his ancestral heritage to Clan Armstrong, astronaut Neil Armstrong was awarded freedom of the town and was invited to visit, which he did in March 1972.
- Edinburgh Woolen Mill was founded in Langholm in 1946.

Background

Following a review of its assets, Buccleuch Estates, which owns land across south and central Scotland, put 25,000 acres of land across the south of Scotland up for sale. The area which included former driven grouse moor as well as farming and forestry land is also a significant site for rare and protected habitats and species, such as Hen Harriers, Merlin, ancient woodlands and peatlands.

Local communities were approached by Buccleuch Estates regarding the sale of the land and so Langholm Initiative began a period of consultation with the community to explore the viability of purchasing 10,500 acres.

Langholm Initiative was founded in 1994 and is one of the longest running development trusts in the South of Scotland. Established initially to respond to the economic decline of the town, it facilitates projects that make a lasting difference to the local area and local people. The Initiative saw the potential of owning the land to not only regenerate the local economy but to preserve and protect the landscape for future generations and make positive steps towards climate mitigation by creating the Tarras Valley Nature Reserve. As well as the creation of a new national nature reserve, the business plan included proposals for renewable energy projects, the development of a number of farm buildings into homes and field study centre as well as nature based tourism initiatives, a peatland restoration project and carbon capture opportunities.





With just one month to conduct an initial consultation, members of the Initiative began a programme of consultation events and door knocking to engage with the community to see if there was the appetite to go ahead with the buy out. The community voted in favour, with double the required number of votes needed, ensuring the Initiative could move forward with confidence that the people of Langholm were behind them.

The hard work to raise the required funds then started in earnest. During the fundraising process due to funding deadlines it was not possible for the team to secure the £6 million required for the full 10,500 acres, so an initial bid for 5,200 acres was made. Buccleuch Estates came to an agreement with the Initiative to exclusively hold back 5,300 acres until May 2022. This would allow the team time to try and raise the remaining £2.2million required for the other 5,300 acres.

Funding

With the significant amount of £3.8 million required, the team at Langholm Initiative began their huge fundraising campaign. This included an online 'Go Fund Me' Crowdfunder campaign, attracting support from nearly 4,000 donors, raising over £200k. Funds were also received from several private donors, foundations such as Garfield Weston and The Bentley Foundation and leading charities including the John Muir Trust.

The Woodland Trust also contributed to the project and as part of their funding the Initiative have committed to creating a new native broadleaf woodland.

The campaign to purchase this significant site received a great deal of interest, locally, nationally and globally, featuring on Channel 4 news and in several national newspapers, all of which helped to boost the income generated. The fundraising of £3.8 million was always going to be challenging and it was only in the last 48 hours before the deadline, that the final £150,000 still needed was covered by a contribution from The Woodland Trust.

Funding Timeline

- May 2020** ✳ **The Langholm Initiative launches the campaign. John Muir Trust donates £100,000**
- June 2020** ✳ **Scottish Land Fund awards £1 million**
- August 2020** ✳ **Carman Family Foundation pledge £500,000**
Hen Harrier Day – held online and hosted by television presenters Chris Packham and Megan McCubbin – raised around £10,000
- September 2020** ✳ **South of Scotland Enterprise announces up to £1 million support. Garfield Weston Foundation pledges £300,000.**

“One of my standout memories was the last few days of the fundraising bid, seeing the generous donations come flooding in was a very special moment.”

Margaret Pool,
Langholm Initiative, Chair

Project Objectives

The overarching vision that Langholm Initiative have for the purchase of this land is that... “Langholm will be a Revitalised Community in a Restored Landscape as an Exemplar of 21st Century Land Management”

By focusing on nature restoration and ecologically supportive land management practices, the former grouse moor can provide a haven for wildlife, peatlands and ancient woodlands can be restored and renewable energy schemes sensitive to the landscape can be implemented, all helping to tackle climate change. The vision also plans to support community regeneration by capitalising on nature-based tourism opportunities, creating local jobs and providing learning and training opportunities.

- * In the first 5 years create the new Tarras Valley Nature Reserve and seek National Nature Reserve status.
- * Protect and increase the number of breeding hen harriers.
- * Restore damaged peatlands.
- * Complete a feasibility study into renewable energy that provides direct benefit to the community and revenue for climate action.



- * Complementary agriculture that balances agricultural and conservation practices.
- * Natural regeneration of ancient woodland along Tarras Water Valley.
- * New native woodland creation.
- * Rural regeneration and tourism by involving the community in the decision making, providing direct and indirect job opportunities and offering training, education and volunteering initiatives.

Whilst the business plan contains a number of key objectives, these all tie into the overall goal of ensuring that the environment remains at the very heart of community regeneration. Being such a unique and ecologically important site, having SSSI status as well as being a Special Protection Area it is vital that the regeneration of the community and this landscape works in harmony to ensure that the needs of both people and place are met.



“The community’s regeneration is a vital part of this process. The land holds huge cultural value to local people, many of whom are excited about the possible community ownership of it”

Kevin Cumming,
Langholm Initiative Board Member

Successes

Having Trustees with experience in negotiations as well as an in-depth knowledge of the moor gave the Board confidence to push for what they felt was an appropriate agreement.

Board members were willing to meet fortnightly, supported by fortnightly staff meetings to ensure tight deadlines could be met.

Working in partnership with likeminded organisations helped make the buy out a reality.

Keeping the community and donors informed at all stages through regular social media posts, consultation events and news items built up support and spread awareness far and wide.

Challenges

The funding from the Scottish Land Fund came with the condition that the purchase be completed by 31 October this left the Initiative with just weeks to raise the remaining millions.

Owning a site that has SSSI and SPA status means there are obligations from a regulatory side with NatureScot. The management plan of the reserve will therefore be carefully developed in collaboration with the community.



Now the land has been secured and plans are in place for creating a new national nature reserve, this has to be managed and balanced with the capacity of the town to cope with the potential increase in visitors.

The project is a long term project, with many considerations and some complex aspects such as carbon capture and renewable initiatives, decisions have to be made thinking far into the future and will require expert advice.

Future Plans

The team are going full steam ahead to secure the £2.2 million required to purchase the remaining 5,200 acres. The deadline for which is May 2022.

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Company Number 385572

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