SCOTTISH
FUTURES
TRUST

Outcomes 2024/25

PRIMARY OUTCOME

1

A clear picture of Scotland's future infrastructure needs

Unlocking the power of asset sharing in Scotland's public sector

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

NET ZERO

SUSTAINABLE PLACES

INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Background

In a time of ongoing fiscal constraint, public sector organisations across Scotland face the pressing challenge of delivering more with less. Budget pressures, rising service demands, and ambitious net zero targets have driven a need for smarter, more sustainable solutions. Among these, the strategic sharing of public sector assets has emerged as a vital part of the solution.

The challenge

Public bodies have been improving efficiency for years, but further transformation is needed. The question isn't whether to do more with less, it's how. One key answer lies in adopting new models of working, underpinned by stronger collaboration and better use of public assets.

The opportunity

Shared assets

Across the country, the benefits of asset sharing are already being realised. Public sector organisations are co-locating services, rationalising estates, and working together to improve outcomes for communities, while reducing costs.

But the potential to scale this impact is even greater. To support this, our Asset Strategy and Workplace team, in partnership with **COSLA, SOLACE**, the **Scottish Government**, and organisations including **Police Scotland**, **East Lothian Council**, **North Lanarkshire Council**, and **West Lothian Council**, developed a set of high-level principles to guide and accelerate progress.

A spokesperson from COSLA said: *"The insight and expertise provided by Scottish Futures Trust were key to help develop this resource. We now have a set of high-level guiding principles which can be used by public organisations, including local authorities and their partners, embarking on asset sharing at a local level."*

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The four guiding principles

Working with the public sector partners, our team recommended an approach that provides a framework for consistent and strategic asset sharing across the public sector:

1. **Place-based approach**

   Aligning asset decisions with the needs of local communities to ensure shared facilities deliver maximum impact

2. **Collaborative approach**

   Fostering partnership between public bodies to drive coordinated planning and decision-making

3. **Maximise use of existing assets**

   Prioritising the optimisation of current assets before commissioning or building new infrastructure

4. **Sharing the costs**

   Ensuring fair and transparent cost-sharing models to support sustainable long-term collaboration

The impact

These principles now underpin a more systematic and integrated approach to asset sharing across Scotland. The benefits are wide-ranging:

- **Financial savings**: Reducing the overall public estate size helps lower ongoing revenue and capital expenditure
- **Net zero contribution**: More efficient use of assets supports decarbonisation goals and reduces the environmental footprint
- **Community gains**: Surplus or underutilised properties can be repurposed to meet local needs, whether for housing, enterprise, or community use

A cornerstone idea **"no organisation should make a profit or loss from another when it comes to sharing assets"** has become a unifying concept that removes a critical barrier to collaboration.

Looking ahead

The guidance, developed with the **Scottish Government's Property & Construction Division** and aligned to its **Single Scottish Estate** programme, is already supporting public bodies in their transformation journeys.

This initiative demonstrates how strategic leadership, collaboration, and clear guidance can turn a complex challenge into a scalable solution. With the Four Principles in place, Scotland's public sector is better equipped to work together, share smarter, and deliver more for communities, all while navigating an increasingly demanding fiscal landscape.