
All you need to know about *Community Land Trusts*

In his address to CPRE members in May this year, *David Cameron, Leader of the Opposition*, talked about working with CLTs, and while they have been around for a bit they are something we will probably hear a lot more of in the future, see *SV, Issue 108, page 8*. A *Community Land Trust* is a mechanism for the ownership of land by the local community. Land is taken out of the market and separated from its productive use so that the penalty from land appreciation is removed, therefore enabling long-term affordable and sustainable local development. Because of this it is, of course, outside mainstream planning. The value of public investment, philanthropic gifts, charitable endowments, legacies or development gain is thus captured in perpetuity, underpinning the sustainable development of a defined locality or community.

Through CLTs, local residents and businesses participate in, and take responsibility for, planning and delivery of redevelopment schemes. They can be used to develop affordable housing to rent or buy for members of the community; enable residents on lower incomes to acquire an economic interest in the success of their community; develop land for affordable workspace and retail units; provide and maintain community facilities for social and public services; manage green spaces and conservation areas and provide access for new entrants to farming; promote resident involvement, local democracy and active citizenship.

CLTs also allow for local people to democratically 'manage the commons'. Under eight per cent of land in the UK is 'commons land' and 'waste land' - its extension and prudent management is possible through CLTs. Armed with this information you may be able to develop community land trust solutions for affordable housing, amenity and workspace in your locality.

Community Land Trusts originated here in Britain and Ireland out of experiments in practical land reform by the co-operative movement and the *Chartists* in the nineteenth century. These experiments led to the development in 1903 of *Letchworth Garden City* using the 'co-operative land society' system devised by *Ebenezer Howard* to capture land value for community benefit. *Howard's* radical innovation was not replicated in Britain but it was revived in the 1950s by *Gandhian* land reformers in the *Gramdan* ('village gift') co-operatives in *India*. This movement, led by *Vinoba Bhave*, brought over one million acres of gifted land into 'village trusteeship', a success which came to the attention of *Dr. Martin Luther King*. The first CLT in the USA was established in Georgia by the civil rights movement in 1967 to provide access to affordable farm land for *African-American* sharecroppers, and it is now a well-defined legal form. In the early 1990's, CLTs were revived in Britain by crofters in *Scotland* for collective purchase of land from absentee landlords. The CLT established on the *Isle of Eigg* was at the forefront of this movement.

All CLTs are 'not for profit' organisations, owning land and property on trust for the benefit of the community. Whatever the form it takes the essence of the CLT mechanism is capturing the enduring value of the land for present and future generations. Democratic and local accountability is central to this. Membership is open to local residents and those wishing to endow land or property for the benefit of the CLT's defined geographical area. Directors are elected by the members and the governance system should ensure a healthy balance on the board to protect the community's long-term interests.

CLTs may be established on 'exception site land' not normally available to the market or for housing development.