

## Case Study

# Community Land Trusts – building affordable housing and other community assets

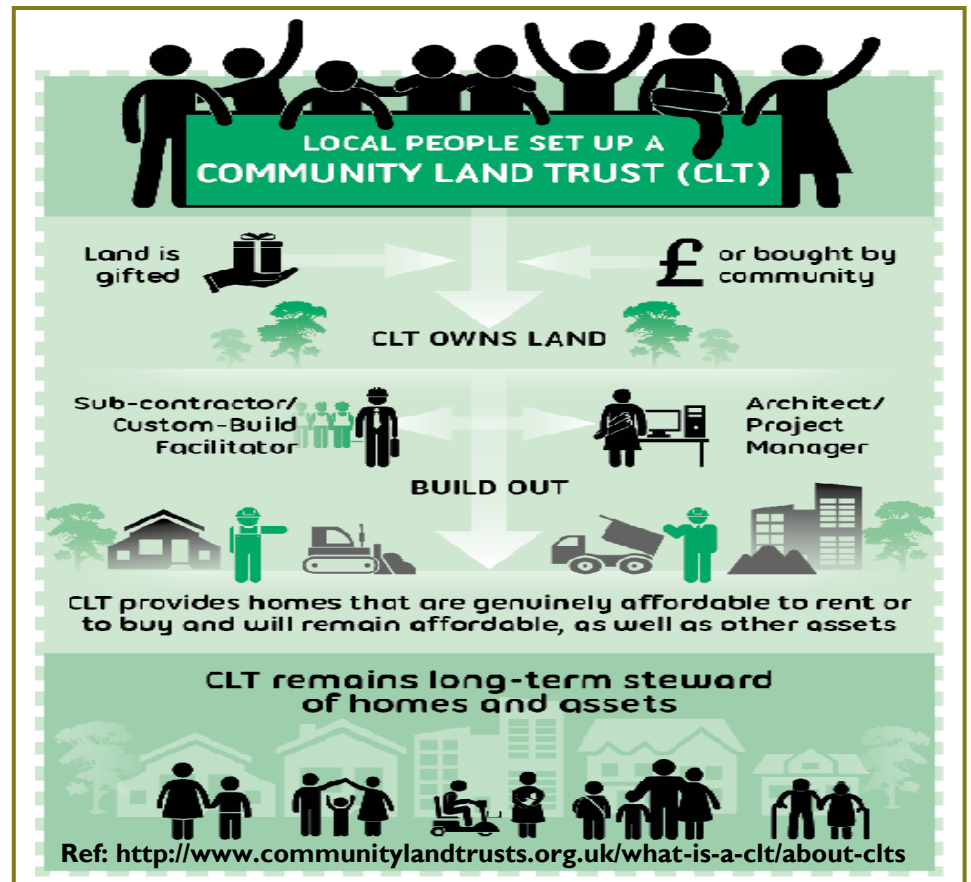
### Background

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are local organisations set up and run by ordinary people to develop and manage homes as well as other assets important to that community, like food growing or workspaces. People set up and join CLTs for all sorts of different reasons.

The need for truly affordable rural housing continues to increase as demand for property in rural areas soars with pressure from high income urban households and low levels of suitable development land supply. Low income families now face a difficult future, often having to move, leaving support and employment networks behind. This is destabilising many villages, forcing out low income households and starving local services of employees and customers. With many relatively low paid jobs in the South Downs National Park (SDNP) it can also be difficult for people working in an area to afford to live within it, which adds to the high level of traffic movements and congestion.

The average house price in West Sussex at £316,733 is more expensive than nearby East Sussex (£296,230) and Hampshire (£282,862). Within the SDNP, prices are even higher with an average price of £351,000 making it the most expensive National Park for housing (*Daily Telegraph*, 18 December 2014).

Community Land Trusts are one solution to the current housing crisis. In 2013 a local partnership founded the Sussex CLT Umbrella Project to provide a single local point of contact for communities wanting to set up a CLT.



### The project

The project, which ran from October 2013 to September 2015, was managed by Action in Rural Sussex (AiRS) with funding from: Coast 2 Capital Local Enterprise Partnership (C2C), £50k; the National CLT partnership, £20k; and South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), £49k. The total budget was £157k, which included £38k of locally generated revenue.

The project provided technical advice, guidance and hands on support to communities wanting to set up a CLT by:

- explaining the different routes for communities to fund, build and take ownership of affordable housing and or work space
- supporting the development of a viable Business Plan and scheme
- helping members to make an informed decision on the most appropriate legal entity to meet their objectives.

The aim was to bring forward and manage a pipeline of 10 community led CLT schemes (six of which would be within the SDNP) to provide a mix of affordable housing, space for local business, job creation and infrastructure development (as identified through Local Neighbourhood Plans) to meet local needs.

“For the first time it will be communities, not central government, who decide what happens in their local area... I want communities to have the freedom to decide on the type and quantity of housing.”

The Rt Hon Grant Shapps, 29 June 2010

## The outcome

17 CLT projects are under development, nine of which are in the SDNP. Slaugham, Steyning and Lewes are the most advanced; Lewes CLT has a 12–15 unit scheme in the business planning stage as part of the North Street Quarter development.

Project delivery was slower than anticipated due to a number of complex factors including:

- An underestimation of the time and effort associated with developing CLTs due to a lack of local experience with the mechanism;
- The workload imposed by the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) process on local community activists operating to the detriment of emerging CLTs which are often seen as a follow on from the NDP;
- High land prices, low availability and competition from commercial developments meaning that access to land becomes a limiting factor; and
- Accessing adequate financing so as to ensure truly affordable housing.

The project operated to budget and continues until March 2016 (without any additional SDNPA funding). With regards to value for money, the project has exceeded the original specification with 17 (target 10) projects in the pipeline, which is a positive reflection on both the quality and amount of work of Tom Warder (Housing and Engagement Team Leader at AiRS) and the project intern.

The long term project benefits to be seen in the form of new units of affordable housing in the SDNP will take some time to show.



**Building affordable housing in the South Downs National Park**

## The future

There is still strong support for CLTs as a valuable mechanism for providing affordable housing.

AiRS are currently in discussion with C2C about further funding and Chichester District Council has indicated its support for a revolving loan fund of the type which has been used to great effect by Cornwall County Council.

Further effort is needed to bring the current projects to fruition and SDNPA will continue to provide officer support for the project in relation to SDNP schemes.

One of the first things that an emerging CLT will begin to think about is what the CLT will achieve and how it will achieve it. All CLTs are different, and have different aspirations. The vision of a CLT could be as simple as: "To develop affordable housing to enable young families to live and work in our village and make our community more sustainable".

For information and support in developing a CLT in your area please contact:

Tom Warder, Housing and Community Engagement Team Leader at AiRS,  
(01273) 407302  
[tomwarder@ruralsussex.org](mailto:tomwarder@ruralsussex.org)

For information on the National Community Land Trust Network  
[info@communitylandtrusts.org.uk](mailto:info@communitylandtrusts.org.uk)

SDNPA contact: David Doxford, Sustainable Economy Officer  
[david.doxford@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:david.doxford@southdowns.gov.uk)

March 2016