





COMMUNITY LAND TRUST FINANCING Understanding the diversity of models in Europe

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With the participation of















BRISTOL CLT (BCLT)

STATE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN BRISTOL

Bristol, a city of **450,000** inhabitants, is one of the ten British 'Core Cities'. Along with Brighton, Oxford and Cambridge, it is just behind London in terms of property prices and rent increases and suffers one of the biggest gaps between average income and home prices in the country. Average house prices are in the region of **12** to **14** times average earnings (Bristol City Council, 2019). Concerning the rental market, many occupants are dedicating over **50%** of their disposable income to rent each month (BCLT, 2019).

Between 1930 and 2018 the **share of social housing decreased** from a third of the housing market to 20%, whereas **buy-to-let** and **student housing** increased (Gilling, 2018). Today, about **15,000 people are on the waiting list** for affordable rental property. Against this backdrop, BCLT aims to provide 'new and improved solutions to the dysfunctional housing and financialised property market' (BCLT, 2019).

LEGAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND

In 2010 the Bristol City Council was a candidate for the 'European Green Capital'. With this in the background, developing ecological and affordable buildings became more of a priority in the political agenda. With the objective of improving housing affordability, the City Council explored the possibility of implementing a municipal CLT. In 2011, after producing knowledge on the topic, local housing activists organised and successfully launched Bristol CLT (BCLT), a grassroots initiative supported by the City.

The 2016 local elections saw a Labour Party mayor elected on a platform of tackling the housing crisis. The new mayor, Marvin Rees, set the target of producing **2,000 units per year**, **800 of which would be affordable housing**. Since then every Council Department has suffered budget cuts except the Housing Department, which has benefited from major investment. **Bristol CLT became part of the new Council's strategy for Community-Led Housing** (CLH) and benefited from active support and multisectoral partnerships.

BRISTOL CLT LEGAL STATUS AND GOVERNANCE

Bristol CLT (BCLT) is a **Community Benefit Society**, a British non-profit legal framework. It operates in the specified area called the 'West of England', which comprises the **four local authority areas around Bristol**. All members are shareholders of the society (£1 share) and possess one vote in the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Based on the classic CLT model, nine members are elected to be part of the Board, respecting a **tripartite governance** of ½ community members, ½ residents and ½ stakeholder members (BCLT, 2018c).

Bristol CLT is also an 'umbrella' support organisation. Its 'Community-Led Housing HUB' service provides fee-based technical and financial expertise and support to local groups wishing to develop community-led housing across the region.

In terms of governance, BCLT faces two challenges, the first one being its **poor record of involving its members** *'in a coordinated and consistent way'* (BCLT, 2018b), and the second **high levels of vacancy and turnover within the Board**, which impairs the stability of the organisation (BCLT, 2018a).

Bristol CLT in brief

Date of creation	2011 (8 years)	
Nature	Grassroot initiative	
Legal structure	Community Benefit Society (Industrial & Provident Society) Registered Provider of Affordable Housing	
Target population	From intermediate demand for affordable housing to people in greater need (BCLT, 2016)	
Membership fees	-£1 (equity share) -Project of establishing specific membership fees for organisations and businesses (£100 per year <20 staff, £500 per year for bigger organisations)	
Resale price	-CLT homes are produced at about 35% of market prices -BCLT does not resell properties	
Projects	 -1 project achieved (Fishponds, 12 units, 2016) -1 project under construction (Shaldon, 25 units) -1 project under study (workspaces over two floors and 8 units) 	
Workforce	-One part-time coordinatorFundraising for new postsCLH Hub service will also be employing 2 staff members	
Number of members	-Community members: 50 -Resident and prospective resident members: +500 (BCLT, 2016) -Stakeholder organisation members: 2	
Resale formula	BCLT does not resell homes	
Ground lease	£200 per year	
2018 budget	Approx. £60,000 (Financial year April to April)	
Sources of funds	-Local authority support for access to land and start-up -Capital and revenue financing from charitable funders and ethical bankers -Community shares -Rental income from property owned (12 properties)	

HOW BRISTOL CLT STARTED

Upfront financial assistance

In 2011 local activists benefited from a £1,000 grant from Bristol City Council to explore the implementation of a grassroot Community-Led Housing (CLH) organisation by holding a CLT launch event. This attracted 350 attendees and led to a further £40,000 grant from the Council to employ a part-time worker for 18 months and get the CLT started (implementation of a steering group, incorporation of a legal framework, etc.). It also endowed the new CLT with a venture fund of £300,000 to look for potential sites for CLH residential developments. The process of identifying and securing the first site took two to three years.

Throughout this period, BCLT co-organised events with the National CLT Network for CLT colleagues from around the country and contributed to conferences and training programmes. In parallel, like London CLT, Bristol CLT benefited from a £10,000 grant from the 'Urban CLT' project in 2014 (NCLTN), which was used for early-stage development of BCLT's second project - capacity building, legal advice and financial modelling (Tom Chance, Personal Communication).

Technical Support

During its start-up phase, Bristol CLT benefited from pro-bono technical assistance from a variety of advisers. Many Board members brought invaluable skills and experience. Notably Steve Bendle - previously involved in the Bristol CLT feasibility study on behalf of the Local Council - provided expert guidance. Additionally, some organisations such as Bristol Community Housing Foundation gave support to governance and project development (BCLT, 2018b).

After securing a mainstream Government grant support for its first project, it emerged that this kind of public support would be dependent on BCLT becoming a registered social housing provider. BCLT thus undertook the process, with the help of its partner, the housing association United Communities, which helped to manage the extensive compliance and due-diligence requirements of this registration procedure with the government's Homes and Communities Agency¹¹⁷ (BCLT, 2016).

CREATION OF PROJECT GROUPS

Resulting from BCLT's dual status (CLT and umbrella organisation), capacity-building initiatives are twofold:

On the one hand, once the land or asset is transferred to BCLT, BCLT supports prospective residents in designing, planning and operating their own projects. These CLT members are engaged at every stage of the development process, from scheme conception (design, contracting the architect, etc.) to building - where they will benefit from support from a Self-Finish Group Manager during the final 'fine-finishing' stages of the project. Prospective residents of BCLT's current project of 50 homes, developed in partnership with United Communities, have been meeting regularly for 3 years to select representatives to work with architects and also to begin to mobilise the actors that will help the community to function once the development is occupied.

On the other hand, since 2016 Bristol CLT has been developing a local advice and support service which will provide a wide range of support to local Community-Led Housing (CLH) groups across the city region (not just in the City of Bristol). It will also work with local authorities in developing policies, land release policies and funding mechanisms. The Hub idea emerged following a one-day conference on 'Scaling Up Community-Led Housing' after the completion of BCLT's first pilot project on Fishponds Road in Bristol 118.

The organisation was approached to act as a pilot project - along with the CLH activists in the city of Leeds - for a plan to develop a National Network of support for CLH start-up groups. This programme was led by the National CLT Network with the support of Power to Change 119, the Government and other funders. In BCLT's case, Power to Change offers approximately £100,000 pounds a year for the first two to three years to design and build up the service.

After a year of development, this pilot programme is about to launch its services and expects to benefit from the second round of the Community Housing Fund (CHF)120. CHF now possesses a specific 'infrastructure' component (£2.6 million of an overall £160 million fund). Revenue grants are used to build capacity at both the national and local levels and to provide technical support to community-led housing groups. BCLT's South-West of England local hub is now able to bid for structural funding through this fund.

¹¹⁷ Home England sponsors registered Housing Associations through grant programmes.

¹¹⁸ 'Scaling up Community Led Housing' at Bristol University.

¹¹⁹ Charity in charge of redistributing funds from the National Lottery to Community projects in England.

¹²⁰ CHF is a national programme aiming to support an increase in housing supply in England by increasing the number of additional homes delivered by the community-led housing sector. It makes £163 million available across England up until 2020-2021.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Site

So far, the two projects developed by **BCLT have relied on public land acquired from the City Council**: Fishponds Road, on the site of a former Victorian school and Shaldon Road on former allotment land (vegetable gardens).

For the Shaldon project, the site was offered through a tailor-made tender process, which invited proposals for 'an exemplary, sustainable custom-build market and affordable self-build housing scheme'. A joint bid from BCLT and its housing association partner United Communities was the only bid submitted in response to the tender invitation. The two organisations began to develop a joint development proposal. Some time later, the property was conveyed to BCLT for a symbolic £1, in a complex transfer process. Notably, this contract contains an overage clause giving the council a right to benefit from a share of any significant development profit. In the BCLT case, this provision is unlikely to become a problem as the value created for the social homes will only be equal to, or slightly higher than, the cost of building them.

In the short term, access to public land is crucial for BCLT for two reasons. The first is the affordability aspect, without which BCLT wouldn't be able to access land. The second is the opportunity to get a deferred deal allowing the CLT to carry out a range of pre-development activities related to the site before acquiring it. This kind of arrangement wouldn't be possible on the open market without paying a significant initial charge for an extended 'option to purchase' for (for example) two years. BCLT doesn't have its own capital reserves to allow it to buy land without raising an external financing package. Acquiring land on the open market would therefore depend on finding a patient landowner willing to wait for a minimum of one year without offering the site to anyone else, in order to allow the CLT to obtain a planning permission and establish plans with commercial banks.

Plan

The planning phase and pre-development work until site acquisition have so far been financed through debt financing and various grants. To this end, BCLT partnered with the gap lender Charity Aid Foundation (CAF) and its lender arm, CAF Venturesome. Although expensive (up to 15% interest rates), these loans from £20,000 to £400,000 enable a CLH group to decrease pre-development risks because they allow for debt write-off in the event of early-stage project failure.

As mentioned earlier, BCLT had to register formally as a provider of social housing in order to access government grant funding to develop affordable homes. These early capital and revenue components thus enabled BCLT to develop its schemes (appointment of the architect, preliminary design, acquisition of the building permits, etc.) up to a point at which the first instalment of government grants could be reached.

For the Shaldon Road project, the first instalment represented 35% (£450,000) of the total £1,250,000 government plan. It has been used to pay back CAF's bridging loan and start the construction phase.

Build

a. Building Homes

In order to deliver their first projects BCLT experimented with various development models. The Fishponds project was carried out by BCLT taking the developer role and being wholly responsible for conducting the construction phase (project completed in 2016).

For the Shaldon Road project, because of the difficulty of raising a £4 million construction-debt financing package (see below), BCLT has been forced (see below) to work with a scheme backed by the United Communities Housing Association, a social affordable housing developer. United Communities, as the developer, will be funding the construction

phase and take the development risks while BCLT will subsequently be buying back finished units at completion of construction.

In its third scheme, a set of offices for a Bristol refugee charity and eight residential units, BCLT is planning to obtain initial financing through the national Community Housing Fund (£187m).

No common financing model exists for the kinds of projects that BCLT and other CLT aim to provide, so that each has to juggle with soft loans and special treatments (Spread I, 2016). For Fishponds Road, BCLT benefited from government grant funding and completed the business model with a commercial construction loan from Resonance, a specialist social-impact investment intermediary.

The general scheme is based on the principle that monthly rents pay back the residual debt after completion of construction. However, this mechanism cannot cover the entire capital development financing package (Spreadl, 2016). It was bridged through a short-term, higher-interest, construction-financing package. This latter was repaid upon completion by a mixture of grants, purchase of equity by some occupants and a long-term mortgage reimbursed from the ongoing rental-income stream.

Under the model adopted by BCLT, households buy between 25% and 75% of the equity and then rent the residual share they don't own (2.75% of unsold equity). Residents thus have a financial stake in the house they can sell when leaving. This investment rises in value along with the wider property market. BCLT's initial target was to sell 60% of the equity for every unit, as it represented a crucial part of the funding package.

The governmental grant framework for supporting the development of shared-ownership homes requires that although residents can buy an initial equity stake of only between 25% and 75%, they must be allowed over time to 'staircase' - i.e. to buy further slices of equity up to complete ownership. At full ownership, residents must then be allowed to buy the freehold interest in their property (i.e. to buy out of the 99-year lease). For CLT this is an extremely unwelcome rule, as it opens up the possibility of lost affordability and of CLT investments being captured by the mainstream market. Unfortunately, BCLT is powerless to prevent residents taking this route and cannot force them to respect the amount of volunteer-based and not-for-profit investment that has been involved in the production of their home, nor can it ask them not to make use of the provisions.

Another point of interest is that the **cost of the scheme has decreased through the use of** 'Sweat Equity' (representing from £0 up to £5,000 per unit), which later became BCLT's trademark. In BCLT projects, prospective residents commit to undertaking the 'fine-finishing' construction phase of their units by themselves (painting, kitchen repair, laying floors, tiling, completing external work). This phase represents approximately 12 - 16 weeks of labour at 15 hours per week for each household.

b. Financing non-residential components

The general BCLT strategy is at present to **establish a portfolio of housing projects**. It is also leading reflection on **using the CLT framework as a means to implement mixed urban development projects**. BLCT **hopes to diversify gradually**, as it identifies potential sources of investment.

For instance, in the Shaldon project, a **community house** was originally part of the scheme but has been **removed from the initial construction phase** due to the high costs of its implementation. **The relatively small returns from affordable housing rental-income streams makes it extremely challenging to cover the cost of such a space**. The community space has therefore been taken out of the initial construction contract **and is being developed by the group of prospective residents as a stand-alone phase coming at a later period**.

For its third project, **BCLT** is partnering with a charity that has the ability to raise capital on its own. The charity will acquire working spaces at completion under a 100-year leasehold, for an amount which will cover development costs, including project management costs, for that proportion of the building.

Focus: Shaldon Road financial operation



Fig. 16 Shaldon Project (Source : Bristol CLT, 2018)

Shaldon Road is an energy-efficient project with 100% affordable mixed tenure of shared ownership and affordable rent. It is composed of 50 homes, 15 of which are to be BCLT homes. The analysis of its development showcases the pitfalls CLT groups face in delivering housing. Indeed, over a 6-year process, the implementation scheme kept on evolving, in response to several unexpected legislative and financial circumstances.

The initial joint-venture scheme was based on a partnership with United Communities Housing Association and relied heavily on the possibility of a £1,250,000 government grant (for the BCLT component). The land was made available on the basis of developing 30% affordable rental units. The initial plan was that BCLT would develop six serviced self-build plots to be sold on the open market. The surplus money raised from these was to be used to cross-subsidise a scheme for 25 land-trust homes. In parallel, United Communities was to build 18 mainstream affordable social housing units. However, this early concept couldn't be implemented because of a wish to include a 'tenure-blind' scheme (i.e. a project in which it would not be possible to tell externally which units were occupied by renters, as opposed to by shared-owners or owner-occupiers).

After a five-year effort to raise the necessary financing and get Shaldon started, it appeared in November 2018 that BCLT would not be able to complete the extensive legal work¹²¹ required in time¹²² to start on-site work by the beginning of April 2019. Such a delay would have caused United Communities to lose its share of government financing, causing the project to collapse.

At the end of 2018, it was agreed that United Communities should take over the construction phase of the project. The scheme thus shifted from a model of self-help housing promotion to a 'buying homes at completion' model. BCLT, which owns the freehold of the site and was planning to provide construction plots for the 25-unit United Communities homes on 125-year leases. Since the restructuring of the development process however, it has been agreed that BCLT will now lease the whole site to United Communities for 250 years, thereby providing a sublease back to BCLT on the plots of BCLT homes. United Communities will pay a ground rent of £200 p.a. to BCLT (as freeholder) for the leases of the plots for its homes.

By the time this scheme modification was agreed, an advance payment of **35% of BCLT's government grant had already been received** (representing £450,000). It emerged that this **amount would need to be repaid** due to the extent of the changes from the original development proposal. After construction completion (2021), BCLT will need to submit another bid for the revised scheme (purchase of completed homes). This **renewed subsidy** will probably not be granted to BCLT until 2021, potentially leading to critical cash-flow issues for the organisation 123.

The **Shaldon Road** case, with its loss of momentum and of potential sources of funding for the core costs of running the organisation, **sheds light on several issues CLT have to face**. These notably include: **bureaucratic red tape and excessive time constraints, and the extensive efforts required**

¹²¹ To sign contract, mobilise contractors, and start on site by the end of March.

¹²² By March 2019, end of the financial year.

¹²³ The issue is now close to resolution.

from small developer organisations that lack the assets and experience to satisfy the risk management requirement of large financial institutions. The case nonetheless also underlines the flexibility and adaptability of CLT when confronted with critical situations and the commitment needed from public authorities to support such schemes geared towards providing homes for lower-income families.

Date	2013-2019 (6 years)
Phase	Build
Origin of the land	Local Council
Number of units	-50 houses -15 CLT homes (40 residents), mix of affordable rents and shared ownership
Common & community space	One community space planned
Total cost	£9,000,000
Land cost	-Negative initial value -Acquired for £1
Open market value/Full value*	£175,000 (per unit)
Affordable rent*	-Sweat equity: £5,000 (amortised over 5 years) -Annual rent: £12,028.72 (sweat equity adjusted) -Annual service charges: £744 -Annual ground lease: £200
Shared ownership*	-Equity sold: 65% (£113,750) -Sweat equity: £5,000 -Annual rent: £1,540 (sweat equity adjusted, 2.75% of unsold equity) -Annual service charges: £520 -Annual ground lease: £200

^{*}Estimated for a one-bedroom unit of 50 m²

BRISTOL CLT OPERATION

Purchase and resale of units

Bristol CLT covers two kinds of housing-need streams. It targets the intermediate demand for affordable housing through a shared-equity offer, while also aiming to address the demand from households in greater needs through an offer of rented properties. Residents of rented homes need to 'have an established working or living connection with Bristol' (BCLT, 2016).

For rental units, beneficiaries are households with a high priority on the City Council housingneed register. In parallel, BCLT has developed a local letting plan, in partnership with the Council, in order to ensure that future renters have a connection to the neighbourhood as well as a willingness to be engaged members of the CLT and to undertake the fine-finishing stage of their units. They are also subject to a five-year minimum lease.

For shared-equity homes, eligibility is derived from nationally set requirements, which set top and bottom income levels. On the one hand, household income should be sufficient to obtain a mortgage on the equity share and to pay the rent on the remaining (2.5% of unsold equity), along with service charges (£500 - £700 per year). On the other hand, would-be buyers have to show that their income and assets are not sufficient to allow them to house themselves through the open market. The majority of UK citizens fill these quite broad criteria. In practice, actual buyers have been households on the **prospective resident groups list**, yet without the

guarantee of getting a unit in the first place. Units have then been attributed on a 'first come, first served' basis.

Resident mortgages on the 60% of the equity have been financed through commercial loans from sympathetic banks or building societies, and the 'Help to Buy: ISA' scheme from Homes England¹²⁴ which tops-up the household's personal savings with £3,000.

The value of homes will be assessed professionally on completion, and incoming shared-ownership residents will buy an equity stake of around 65% of this amount. Through this arrangement, BCLT hopes to produce homes that **are 35% less expensive than on-the-market homes** and of significantly higher quality and sustainability (BCLT, 2016).

BCLT operations and development of new projects

BCLT's everyday activities include **developing a land portfolio, managing assets, recycling revenues back into community work**, **and supporting new groups**. In the long run, it is aiming 'to develop a supply of development sites and make them available for groups on long-term leases' (BCLT, 2018b).

This work is presently undertaken by Board members and two development officers for a total budget of £60,000 per year (with the objective of increasing it to £100,000 in the coming years). Further needs are emerging over time in respect to financial and project management, community engagement, business planning, self-building and event management (BCLT, 2016).

Sources of expenses for Bristol CLT throughout the 2018-2019 financial year resulted from project development costs (notably pre-development work on the Shaldon project), core fees (including staff costs totalling £52,583), management and maintenance of completed projects cost (£9,671 for Fishponds), as well as from loan repayment costs (£22,487, Resonance long-term loan).

On the other hand, its major sources of income came from grants received either from the public authorities, as a registered housing provider; charitable funders (about 20%); development fees (50%); or rental income on the Fishponds project (about 30%).

BCLT is currently undergoing a transitional phase. It survived its start-up status thanks to its pilot projects but hasn't yet managed to develop a substantial portfolio of income-generating projects. Because of the impact of the Shaldon project on BCLT's financial stability, it is now crucial for BCLT to find new intermediate sources of finance to secure the organisation's operating costs in the short and medium terms¹²⁵.

Launching a share offer is one of the options being developed by BCLT in order to raise £600,000 of equity by summer 2019. The cash-flow crisis has highlighted the need for BCLT to find some new forms of value other than government grants and land from local authorities. The share offer will give the organisation some operational stability, and act as a lever to build a venture fund and allow it to acquire new sites.

Over the shorter term (2019-2022), BCLT will focus on the following activities. In terms of financing, BCLT aims at **restructuring a 25-year long-term mortgage** for the Fishponds properties (currently 3 years remaining out of a 7-year short-term loan). It is also looking into several opportunities for **generating revenue**, for example: through the implementation of a **community-share offer** in order to purchase 15 of the Shaldon units, (objective of £650,000 raised by the summer 2019), the **development of monthly membership fees**, and the

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¹²⁴ Government-backed mechanism boosting investment by first time buyers by 25%.

 $^{^{125}}$ Some options considered could be: to call upon the National CLT Network for support, merge Hub activities to the CLT etc.

establishment of a grid-fee system for the community-led development support programme (local CLH Hub) (BCLT, 2018b).

BCLT will also **pursue the development of new sites**. After completion of the Shaldon project it will aim at purchasing the 'Tenants Hall' site in Barton Hill from Bristol City Council.

In terms of capacity building, BCLT will set up a community-housing 'campus' that will provide membership advice and services to Community-Led Housing groups in the West of England region. It will also build partnerships with local authorities and other property owners in order to facilitate access to land. And, finally, it will establish a flow of appropriate financial advice and development capital to the sector, in partnership with Bristol & Bath Regional Capital and other funders (BCLT, 2019).

CONCLUSION

BCLT pursues the **objective of contributing to the development of 200 CLT homes**, as well as of supporting other community-led organisations to complete a further 300 homes at the City level by 2022 (Wainwright, 2017).

The foremost **barriers** identified by BCLT in terms of sustainable development were the **bureaucratic processes** involved in becoming a recipient of government funding and in the **related obligations of registered providers**.

BCLT also faced the immense difficulty of raising a large amount of debt financing on the basis of having no assets and little experience. The Shaldon project has highlighted the problems of banks' lack of familiarity with the CLT model and the impracticalities generated by the limited development lead-times imposed by government funding rules. Raising a £4-million debt-financing package eventually led to inordinate amounts of work on due-diligence processes.

Moving on from here, BCLT's **priority is to develop a substantial portfolio** and to reach a **similar position to housing associations**, in which it would be able **to negotiate a more standard form of lending packages with its financial partners**, without having to undergo such costly fulfilment-processes of due-diligence requirements.

Getting through the current critical intermediary phase would however also require greater public support in order to reach a threshold of 50 CLT built units, so that banks would be more open to different levels of compliance in their lending operations. Pursuing this goal, BCLT is exploring the possibility of having their construction loans guaranteed by the Council.

Finally, BCLT is positioning itself as a strong umbrella organisation providing a wide range of services (financial advice and partnership agreements) to Community-Led Housing groups in the West of England Region.

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With the participation of

The City of Lille



City of Lille supports the project management and coordinates the partnership agreement. As lead partner of the project, it is involved in all Work Packages (WPs) in order to ensure their proper coordination and advancement.

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CLT Brussels



CLTB leads the general coordination of the project, along with the City of Lille. As part of this project, CLTB develops new financial models and new strategies for enhancing community involvement. As a pilot CLT, CLTB will inspire other initiatives in the region. Through its involvement in capacity building, long-term effects and communication Work Packages, CLTB contributes to the spreading of the CLT model within the North-West Europe (NWE) region and helps emerging CLT to overcome their initial barriers.

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CLT Ghent



To support Community Land Trusts, CLT Ghent is leading the four CLT Pilot Work Packages and contributes to other aspects of the programme.

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London CLT



London CLT brings practitioner expertise as a CLT in the very expensive housing market of London. It has particular experience in engaging with communities and the state, based on a community organising approach. It is making the change from a grant-funded not-for-profit organisation with a campaigning emphasis to a sustainable social enterprise, actively exploring a diverse range of social finance options. LCLT is keen to develop new ways to create sustainable funding.

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UK National CLT Network



Leads the Communications Work Package (WP); leads the Start-up Fund WP, building on its existing grant programme that provides small grants for nascent or new CLT to buy in technical support and reach key milestones; leads the Long-term Effects WP, specifically delivering the advocacy campaign work and social-impact measurement work; and supports the delivery of other aspects of the programme.

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