

# Somerset Co-operative Community Land Trust Newsletter, Autumn 2023

Dear Somerset Co-operative CLT Member,

In Taunton, we're nearing the final push for our East Reach scheme. We have a buyer willing to purchase 11a, and with the funds from that we can focus on settling the outstanding issues and securing planning permission at last.

In Wiveliscombe we're we're still waiting for the Council's report on Highways and due to the Council's delays that the Ecology survey has gone out of date will have to be updated.

The CLT notes that the there were severe delays with the planning department before the unification of the district councils into Somerset Council earlier this year, and this seems not to have improved since. This and the phosphate issues that has held up hundreds of planning applications (including both of the CLT's) for up to three years now has all meant that the CLT has been caught up in a problem-laden planning situation not of its making.

Alan Debenham, Chair of the Board

## Notice of AGM

### Wednesday November 8th

From 1.30pm for a 2.30pm – 4pm meeting

You can attend in person at 10 East Reach, Taunton  
or join us online from 2.15pm using this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/sccltagm>

Agenda papers can be downloaded from the website  
from Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> November

We are now looking for both voluntary Board Members (Directors) and volunteers to join even if its for an hour or two a month.

If you're interested in helping in any way, take a look at attached "Helping Out" or if you know someone who might, please pass this on. You will find the information on the revamped website when it goes live in the next few days.



## Building Our Capacity

- see page 2

## Bring back the CLT fund

- see page 3

## Community Enterprise

- see page 4

Take a look at our all-new website at: [www.somersetcclt.org.uk](http://www.somersetcclt.org.uk)

# Preparing for Growth



## We're raising our game

It's time to step up our capacity to meet the challenges ahead" said SCCLT Chair Alan Debenham. "With over 30 affordable homes in the pipeline and ambitions to help bring more community-led homes to people in housing need to towns across Somerset\*, we need to make sure we've got the right mix of people, skills and experience to lead us on this next exciting phase. And to ensure we're building community support across our area, with a good representation of all sectors and groups"



# BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES

## A last minute call from the CLT Network

Are there any women interested in community leadership? If you're quick, there are free spaces on Upfront's training programme for women in nonprofits.

This programme aims to develop advocacy and grow leadership skills among women and usually costs £1,200 per trainee. As Somerset Co-op CLT is a CLT Network member, women who are taking up leadership roles as volunteers can join this training for FREE.

There is a form to complete this form by 5pm on Tuesday 31st October. You can find it at [tinyurl.com/upfrontSCCLT](http://tinyurl.com/upfrontSCCLT) or by sending an email to [josie@communitylandtrusts.org.uk](mailto:josie@communitylandtrusts.org.uk).

The full programme will run 6th November-11th December, with a time commitment of 2-3 hours per week. This includes the following live online sessions (which are also recorded in case you miss the live session):

Why you and why now? What makes you extraordinary (yes, you are, you'll see); learning the language; culture and systems; choosing what you want to talk about, how to design your story, presenting, and more.

With the help of match funding from Somerset Council, the CLT has embarked on an ambitious programme of capacity building. The three main aims of the programme are to strengthen the board, develop and implement new systems and procedures, and build membership.

The main outward facing aspects of this work that members will notice will be the improvements to the website (launching soon) and social media presence - a prelude to Director and Member recruitment campaigns that get underway later this month. The CLT is looking to build up the board, bringing in a wider range of people with skills and expertise as well people from under represented groups, lived experience or a commitment to our aims.

Alongside this there's whole host of other work going on, including training, and the development of systems and resources (such as online toolkits and handbooks) to help ensure that the foundations are laid for continuing improvement and renewal, once the programme finishes.

"We're building for the future, today" added Alan.

\*includes Somerset, BANES & N Somerset

# Bring back the Community Housing Fund

The Community Housing Fund has been incredibly successful.

From Cornwall to Cleveland, Liverpool to Peterborough, new community led homes have been built, enabled or started in development thanks to the fund. SCCLT's Wiveliscombe scheme was of course among them.

Where are we now?

In September 2021 the former Housing Minister joined CLTs to launch the research on the current pipeline and funding need. He warmly welcomed the research and said "community led housing has an important, indeed you might say, unique contribution to make to meeting our housing need".

In October 2021 the National CLT Network set out the full policy case for extending the CHF.

Since then they have been speaking to lots of MPs across all parties, and encouraging members and others in the sector to do the same. They have been working behind the scenes to influence officials, advisers and policy experts.

The Government now have a decision to make. We know that successive ministers have supported the CHF in principle. But they need to put their money behind it, with a full £53 million plus flexibility on tenures in the Affordable Homes Programme.



## Write to your MP!

Please ask your MP today asking them to lobby on behalf of CLTs. Tell your MP all about your project, what you hope you achieve, and how critical a CHF grant will be. Your MP can write to the Housing Minister asking that they renew the Community Housing Fund, citing your project. Letters from MPs have a huge impact on ministers.

You will know that our shop front at 10 East Reach is an incubator for co-operative and community enterprises – here's some of their latest news.

# News from our tenants



SWCD (formerly Somerset Co-op Services) is our tenant and manages the incubator. It is a co-operative development body – one of many across the country and part of Co-operatives UK.

They are providing advice and support to new and growing co-ops – over thirty last year, four of them brand new – and have had particular success helping co-ops to scale up and bring assets into common ownership (£900,000 in 2021 and 2022).

Now they are preparing to grow their team and extend their scope to Devon, Dorset, Wiltshire and Severnside. Like SCCLT, they are seeking investment in community shares – see their website for details.

Our local credit union (the result of a merger between West Somerset, Taunton and Bridgwater) continues to build members savings – they are now over £1.2M.

They've also extended their range of loan products so that they can serve members with a wide range of needs: everything from helping out with a short term crisis to investing in home improvements. Why not call in on a weekday morning to see what they could do for you?

Eco Centre SW is becoming increasingly well known around Somerset, taking stalls to many local events.

At the heart of their plans is the planned Eco Centre itself: a centre of excellence for sustainability for the South West. The vision for the Eco Centre is establish a visitor attraction and a discovery centre for sustainable living and working.

But there is plenty of practical action they can do right now. 'Climate Action Plans' are their current project, where we are supporting people to draw up pro-active and realistic Plans based on their daily routines. Find out more: [ecocentresw.org](http://ecocentresw.org).



Could Somerset provide the UK with its first ever co-operatively run train operating company?

The workers / passengers co-op has been building its case for almost ten years as it prepares to enter one of the most tightly regulated markets.

At last, the Office of Rail and Road is nearing a decision on the Taunton – Swindon route. Follow their progress (and get involved!) at [www.go-op.coop](http://www.go-op.coop).



10 East Reach,

Taunton TA1 3EW

Phone: 0300 456 2265

Email: [landtrust@somerset.coop](mailto:landtrust@somerset.coop)

Visit: [www.somersetcclt.org.uk](http://www.somersetcclt.org.uk)

Registered as Somerset Co-housing Community Land Trust, number IP030745.