

Colerne Community Land Trust. Secretary's Report for the year 2024-25

1. **Many thanks** to our volunteer Trustees who have persevered through the opening chapters in this long process of manifesting a community-led housing – including:
 - Paddy Harman who has stood in as Chair since Robert Weston's sad death;
 - Hilary Holman, our Treasurer who ensures detail is noticed and money is accounted for;
 - Anne Nicholas, our Membership Secretary and website manager;
 - Clive Spencer for his extensive knowledge and understanding of sustainable building process and contacts in this field;
 - Alison Minch and Brian Birchfield who have shared important insights and are so good at spreading the word among others in the community;
 - Peter Mellett for his wonderfully clear minute taking;
2. And a warm welcome to Peter Gorman who has joined us this year and is doing battle with the manner in which funding is found.
3. Thanks also to the Rural Housing Hub workers – Trevor Cherriot and Steven Vaux.

4. Decisions made during the year

- a) Following the pre-application paper prepared last year and explored in principle with the Parish Council, we have had feedback from the Cotswold National Landscape planning officer and from Wiltshire Council Planning team. Both have been generous with their advice and guidance and we are now fully aware of what is expected for any full planning application for this site. Having sought advice we have decided we will go forward with a full Planning Application once appropriate funding is obtained.
- b) Having visited other projects and asked about working relations with partners, the Trustees have decided to work together with the White Horse Housing Association. This Housing Association has an excellent record for relating with tenants and responding to maintenance issues. They need us to gain planning approval before they can risk raising funds for the actual development.
- c) The Trustees have also made contact with Barefoot Architects who are responsible for a number of rural CLT projects in the southwest and also the award winning co-housing project, Hazelmead, in Bridport. We toured that project a few weeks ago with members of the local CLT and also had useful conversations with some of the residents.

- d) Members of the Bridport CLT have assisted us with planning our first community consultation to explore design options for the actual site. The aim is to collect together all thoughts **from** our community about shaping the nature of this potential development **for** our community.
- e) Our membership of The National CLT Network has been invaluable for keeping us trained up-to-date and informed of the changing planning and funding situations for CLT projects. All CLTs have been involved in lobbying for better pre-planning funding to assist projects in getting to the development stage more quickly. CLTs are a major contributor of affordable housing that truly meets local need.

5. **Project funding** Trustees are now preparing the infrastructure for raising community shares towards the part-funding of this housing project. We shall always be in partnership with other bodies, but our investment will always be the land which will remain held in trust for the community in perpetuity. Other CLTs raise shares of up to £5,000 value as long-term investments for 5 years with a 4% return after that time. The return to the CLT will be built into the rents/sale prices via the leasing of the land to the Housing Association.

We are a Community Benefit Society with limits on our assets rather than a charity, so this is how we are mainly able to raise funds for development. We can take donations, and indeed welcome them. Some members have already helped us in this way. However, as a Community Benefit Society, we are less able to apply for charitable trust monies or receive charity aid.

We are indebted to Karen Crawford for her free advice concerning Corporation tax and management of share units.

7. We have been lobbying for an up-to-date Housing Needs Survey for our parish. Unfortunately Wiltshire Council discontinued these during their Local Plan review. However, we are one of the first parishes to be offered the latest version of the survey which begins on Monday 24th November. As CLT members we hope that you will spread the word and encourage your neighbours to complete their surveys. Demonstrating local housing need is an essential item in justifying the planning application and funding for the development.

8. We remain grateful to the landowners for their patience and real support for the housing we wish to develop for our community. This is in stark contrast to many commercial developers who lend lip service to the idea of affordable housing and then find reasons why it cannot actually be delivered.

9. The Future. Although there remain some hurdles to funding, the current Housing Minister is very supportive of the examples by CLTs of good-quality buildings and the encouragement of community growth. From January we shall begin to see the roll out of funding for social housing projects of all kinds. We have already met with our funding manager from Homes England (the Government's quango for the allocation of housing funds). We are also registered with *Resonance*, the company set up to grow and allocate funding for community-led housing schemes.

JM October 2025.