

Cornwall Council Case Study

The story of the local authority's approach to community-led housing

Basic summary

- **Local housing market characteristics**
 - Rural
 - High housing demand
- **Region:** South West
- **New build homes. Examples given:** CLT new build; cohousing retrofit scheme
- **Partners:** Cornwall Housing Partnership of RPs including Cornwall Rural Housing Association; Aster, Coastline, DCH, Westward, Ocean, Hastoe, Cornwall Community Land Trust umbrella group; local CLTs
- **Main outcomes:** Cornwall Council's target is 800 affordable homes, of which community-led housing forms a significant proportion. Since 2007 Cornwall Community Land Trust has developed or enabled almost 200 affordable homes at social or affordable rent and discounted sale to be developed for local people priced out of the housing market

Key message: Cornwall Council sees community-led housing (CLH) as a major delivery vehicle for housing and economic growth in Cornwall. Through enabling and supporting communities and supporting the establishment of a CLT with a local housing association and providing revolving loan finance, affordable homes of various tenures have been created for local people priced out of the local housing market, where many homes are sold to second home, investment and retirement housing purchasers.

1. *The story: what was the problem that needed addressing?*

Cornwall Council (CC) is a rural authority with some large settlements. It is an area of very high housing demand. The top three local housing market challenges are:

- Second homeownership,
- high house prices/low wages;
- lack of significant private rented sector

The authority retains some council housing stock and is actively building new social housing.

2. *Why is Cornwall Council supporting CLH?*

CC has very clear aspirations for housing growth across the County. This includes affordable and open market housing, delivered through developers, Registered Providers (RPs), the Council, individuals, and communities. The Council considers that all possible delivery vehicles must be utilised if growth is to be encouraged. Communities can play a large role in this and Cornwall has delivered a considerable amount of CLH over the years.

CLH helps CC deliver their Local Plan and provide desperately needed affordable housing, as well as housing that is generally more affordable to local people.

CLH also helps to increase investment in the local economy (the Council's other major objective), especially as it is reliant on the construction sector, among others. It can also lead to very high

quality housing across Cornwall. CC is fully committed to using CLH as a delivery vehicle for growth.

3. How does Cornwall Council enable CLH schemes to develop?

A supportive policy environment:

CC's [Local Plan](#) encourages CLT developments, and other community-driven aspirations. The [Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document](#) states that many forms of affordable housing defined within it, including discounted homes for sale, intermediate homes for rent or to buy or self-build schemes can be delivered, owned and managed through a Community Land Trust (CLT) structure. It affirms that the Council supports the development of CLTs to meet local housing needs.

Enabling support

The Council has a large Affordable Housing Team that has decades of experience in enabling and supporting community groups to provide their own homes, and are in the process of setting up a new delivery team which will be tasked with unlocking custom/self-build opportunities, as well as helping communities deliver their Neighbourhood Plan aspirations

Allocation of sites

- CC is working up a pipeline of sites for the CLH groups to take forward for additional development. Partnership is the key to their success on this point.
- The Council holds a register for individuals and groups that are interested in self/custom build housing and is developing a pipeline list of small sites that may be suitable for such groups.

Funding

CC was allocated £5.1m from the Government's Community Housing Fund, which will enable it to boost CLH output considerably. The Council already had a pipeline of activity already worked up that they have been able to fund. Funds will be used in the following areas:

Enabling support

- Funding a new Rural Housing Enabler post for 6 years to proactively seek new affordable housing development opportunities in rural parts of the County, unlocking more development in villages using the CLH approach to realise local aspirations for growth.
- CC is also considering extra resources to work with town and parish councils and Neighbourhood Planning groups to deliver CLH and self and custom build housing.

Revenue funding

- Funding to build capacity in Cornwall Rural Housing Association and Cornwall Community Land Trust, both of whom are experts in CLH delivery
- Funding for technical and early stage feasibility work within local CLT groups or CLH RP specialists with whom the Council has been engaging, to unlock 5 sites that would not otherwise have progressed.

Capital funding

- Funding the development costs of two affordable housing schemes totalling 34 mostly affordable rent homes, brought forward by Cornwall CLT and built by housing association development partners. These schemes would not be deliverable without capital grant.
- A revolving loan facility to help custom and self-builders access low cost finance to provide new homes or provide plot specific enabling or infrastructure funding to support delivery on small sites.
- A community-led brownfield regeneration fund to unlock stalled sites for affordable housing growth where the sites have the full support and involvement from the local community. There are many such sites in Cornwall that could generate substantial affordable housing growth in partnership with communities by investing in ground remediation, etc.

4. Partnership work in Cornwall to support CLH.

CC liaises with the Cornwall Housing Partnership, the local RP development partner network. A range of housing associations are active in CLH in Cornwall, including Cornwall Rural HA, Hastoe, Coastline and Aster HA. CC has allocated funding to all of them from the Community Housing Fund to deliver more homes.

The Council also works closely with local CLTs (Cornwall CLT umbrella organisation and local groups). CC is looking to undertake more delivery on this type of site itself.

5. Examples of homes that have been produced by CLH schemes in Cornwall

The homes produced are new build homes, although some CLH groups are looking at refurbishing other types of building, such as warehouses and offices. CC considers it to be fundamental that the homes created should be affordable. This outcome is determined through s106 agreements. CC supports a range of tenures, including affordable rent, social rent (although this is uncommon), shared ownership, shared equity and discounted sale.

[Cornwall Community Land Trust](#) was established to provide affordable homes in Cornwall. It was set up through Cornwall Rural Housing Association (CRHA) with funding from the Council, the Tudor Trust and DEFRA. Since 2007 it has developed nearly 200 affordable homes, either on its own or through supporting new CLTs, partly with the support of a CC revolving loan facility. These homes include discounted affordable homes for sale (the CLT uses covenants on freehold sales to enable permanent affordability and to ensure the local CLT has control over future allocations), homes at social or affordable rent owned and managed by local housing associations, and mixed tenure projects.

[Trelay Cohousing Community](#) is a rural retrofit cohousing scheme housing 28 people in 12 homes with several communal buildings. The scheme is owned co-operatively by South West England Sustainable Enterprise Society and residents are required to be members and buy equity certificates on a Mutual Home Ownership basis, either through using their existing personal resources or by making a commitment to a proportion of the mortgage.

6. Next steps

CC has always seen CLH as a major delivery vehicle in Cornwall, and is planning to encourage this to grow further using the new funding from DCLG's Community Housing Fund.

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