

**Chairman’s Annual Report**

Our Community Land Trust is one year old. The first few months were focussed on launching our website and building our membership, which resulted in the current total of 42 shareholders. A well-attended general meeting in January gave everyone an opportunity to discuss the scope of the CLT’s plans for the future, and to raise a variety of questions about how CLTs work.

The shadow Board got to work, augmented by an extra member, and has moved forward in some specific areas, making careful progress in discussions with local landowners. Amongst the reasons is one that many CLTs encounter, namely that of convincing site owners to work with us rather than with commercial developers. The attraction of achieving high site values is strong, but has to be weighed against what we are offering – a community-led housing project that will meet the specific needs of the local community and provide genuinely affordable homes. CLTs can’t compete on the same terms as developers, and rely on a degree of compromise by the land owner, who may benefit from the designation of a site for appropriate housing.

Our membership of the national Community Land Trusts Network (representing 548 CLTs across England and Wales) has been incredibly valuable, putting us in touch with the knowledge and experience of other groups and with various experts in the field. We’ve also been very fortunate in having the support of the Oxfordshire Rural Housing enablers, and in particular its officer Fiona Brown who has guided us through our initial phase.

We’ve met with our recently-elected MP Sean Woodcock and with officers of Cherwell District Council to register our existence and our ideas, and have prepared and sent draft Business Plans to three Housing Associations with whom we might work on projects, as we are not ourselves a registered housing provider, but might access construction funding through a Housing Association. We’ve also applied for a grant from the National Lottery to help with feasibility studies, and from Resonance Community Developers (the Government’s chosen channel for funding community-led housing) for site purchase funds. The Lottery Fund has turned us down as we don’t meet their current priorities, but Resonance are still in the running..

We have also contacted experts in financial appraisal of housing projects and an experienced developer of community housing in Oxfordshire, in readiness for the next stages, should they emerge. We will be reliant on grants and donations to move forward to planning application stage for any scheme on which we reach agreement, with costs estimated to be £70k to satisfy Cherwell’s requirements for supporting studies.

So what has been achieved this first year is principally an understanding of how we will operate, including some of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges we recognise. We are delighted to have recruited more members than is apparently typical of a new CLT, and identified potential projects on which we have done preliminary work, but which are however subject to a degree of confidentiality at the moment. We’ve made contact with significant stakeholders and established appropriate and productive links with the national CLT network, the Financial Conduct Authority and with HMRC.

On that last point, we’re satisfied that no tax is yet due as no trading has taken place, and we have taken advice on that from an accountant who has helpfully given pro bono advice, as well as from regulatory sources. Our assets could well be eaten up by audit costs, but there is statutory provision for full exemption from audit because of the low level of our holdings, subject to a requirement for that proposition to be endorsed by members at the AGM.

Community Land Trusts work towards a long-term vision for their community, and we know this will require patience, determination and, above all, maintaining a high level of engagement with local people to keep the aims alive and kicking. So we are very grateful to our members, current and future, for their ongoing support while we navigate our way to our first project.

**Martin Lipson, Chair**

September 2025