

# Community Land Trusts Manifesto 2024

Maniffesto Ymddiriedolaethau  
Tir Cymunedol 2024



## Foreword

# Britain is a nation of builders without a toolkit.

In every community there are people who recognise that 4 in 10 people are struggling to meet their housing costs, that left behind areas are only getting a third of their fair share of charitable funding, and that we need to transform our energy and natural ecosystems for net zero.

But our systems for land, development, housing and regeneration offer them no agency. Our planning system only really empowers the blockers to object.

Community Land Trusts organise and empower the builders in our communities. They start with land, which underlies many of the problems we face today. The lack of homes people can afford; poor access to decent, quality workspaces and community spaces; the degradation of our natural environment are all symptoms of land not serving a greater social purpose.

Ownership of the land confers agency, power, wealth.

We want to distribute that wealth, power and agency more widely, to serve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of our communities. To see more land democratically stewarded for social good.

With ownership through a Community Land Trust, communities become partners to developers, not opponents; campaigners with, rather than against, councils; participants in building our nation, not passive consultees.

Our vision is that every community can play an active role in making itself more socially, economically and environmentally sustainable through community ownership and stewardship of land.

Since 2010 governments have supported community power but within a niche of toothless community rights. The question should not be: how can we help communities circumvent the system at the fringes? It should be: how can we rewire the system so that community agency becomes a normal part of the process, community ownership a normal outcome?

**We are calling on the next government to rewire the system.**



Photo credit: Yiannis Katsaris

# About Community Land Trusts

In the past decade, Community Land Trusts have managed to build or take ownership of land with almost 2,000 homes and a further 100 green spaces, shops, pubs and workplaces.



**1,839**  
affordable homes



**100**  
green spaces, shops,  
pubs and workplaces

They have done this against the grain of the system. In spite of the challenges, they have shown that these developments are more popular, with fewer planning objections and much more support. They are of a higher quality, with better energy efficiency standards and a growing list of industry awards.

**What if the grain of the system went with CLTs?**

# Housing, regeneration and town centres

If just 5% of housing built each year were in community hands, similar to other European countries, we would build community wealth of over £1bn.

If 5% of every high street were in community hands, communities could play an active role in turning around their local economies.

We wouldn't just build housing and shop units - we would build cohesive communities. Community led development has been found to improve social connections and reduce loneliness.

We would be giving people control over the newly built community centres, shops, green spaces and trees that are currently falling into the hands of unaccountable private companies.

We would be giving communities the means to develop without displacement and gentrification.

## Case studies



### Kennett CLT

Kennett CLT is a key partner in a 500 home development, tripling the size of the existing village. It was part of the masterplanning client team, sits on the project board overseeing the build out, and will take ownership of half the affordable homes and all of the open space and public amenities once completed.

### Hastings Commons

Hastings Commons has bought derelict and difficult buildings around the Trinity Triangle area of Hastings and turned them into social spaces, homes and workspaces affordable to local people. They have a venture company to buy risky properties and revitalise them, and transfer these to a CLT once they are de-risked.

## Our Manifesto

The Government can rewire the system so that communities can commission and codesign developments in their area, and own more of the assets that are built or redeveloped:

1

### Community led development sites

Give Local Plans and neighbourhood plans the ability to allocate sites, and parcels of large sites, for community led development, with a call for community priority sites in the call for sites process; and capitalise on the new community led exception sites to encourage more locally-led settlement growth.

2

### Large site stewardship

Require that community assets including open space and playgrounds, workspace, commercial and retail units, renewable energy and affordable housing are owned and stewarded by a democratic and accountable body like a CLT, and promote opportunities for CLTs to commission and codesign more of these assets with councils, developers and housing associations.

3

### Community led regeneration

Enable, subject to a ballot, tenants and residents to form a CLT to take ownership of, and have greater agency, in the redevelopment of social housing estates and other important local assets in partnership with councils, housing associations and developers, including reviving the regulations for the Right to Transfer.

4

### Affordable housing pre-development finance

Provide for enablers of community led development to agree strategic grants with Homes England, the Welsh Government and the GLA to draw down finance for pre-development work, working with communities to acquire sites and gain planning permission for community approved designs, and bring these de-risked projects to partner developers and housing associations.

5

### Leasehold and commonhold

Replace leasehold with commonhold as the default arrangement but maintain exemptions for CLTs, and ensure reforms protect the CLT governance model that balances current occupants' interests with those of the wider community and future generations.





## Our Manifesto

# Community ownership strategy

In the past decade, community ownership policies in the UK have put the onus on communities themselves to conceive of, develop and finance ambitious projects.

They are asked to apply to dozens of niche funds with criteria that clash with their holistic place-based vision. They are offered toothless and bureaucratic community rights to take on a failing asset while having no leverage on a major regeneration project next door. The hidden foundations of the rare success stories are not replicable in many of the communities that need power and agency the most.

As a consequence, community ownership has remained small-scale, and many left behind communities have lacked the existing social capital to take full advantage.

In the UK, and internationally, we can see examples of community ownership at much greater scales. National and regional intermediaries raise finance and deliver projects in partnership with the public and private sector - doing all of the heavy lifting for the community and with the community, resulting in community ownership of the assets.

## Case studies



### Middlemarch CLH

Middlemarch CLH is an enabler working with over 70 communities in the South West, primarily in sensitive rural areas. It supports communities to acquire sites, obtain planning consents and find a partner housing association to build and then manage the homes, with the land ownership remaining with the community.

### CORE

CORE was established by Power to Change and Big Society Capital to acquire six large solar farms, establish an effective operator, optimise the management and financing, and then support five community benefit societies to raise the equity to buy them out.

The government can support the development of a cadre of intermediaries to wire community ownership into markets. A new Community Ownership Strategy should bring together a powerful set of tools, each of which should be designed to be compatible with other mainstream policy levers and agencies such as the Affordable Homes Programme and Homes England, rather than being designed as parallel and niche interventions.

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### A Community Ownership Fund

Expanded to enable the purchase of any asset that the community deems of social, economic or environmental value, including housing and undeveloped land, and with a funding stream directed towards the development of new sector-based intermediaries that can lever in more private capital and deploy it across multiple projects at a greater scale.

7

### A Community Growth Lab

Providing a £150m endowment to support the development of the 'missing market' of delivery and finance intermediaries to support community ownership at scale. These may be specialist developers of community assets, enablers that help communities partner with the private sector, or acquisition vehicles to buy up existing or newly built assets.

8

### A Community Right to Buy

A right of first refusal to buy assets of community value and public assets for sale at an independently valued price, in connection with a wider reform to address prices inflated by hope value.



# Nature restoration and farming

New carbon markets and public funds are reshaping our countryside and urban green spaces to rewild landscapes and change farming practices.

This must happen at a larger scale, but not at the expense of the social and economic wellbeing of people who live in and near to this land. Community ownership of more land around every settlement can anchor these communities, building local wealth and agency out of the transformation of our landscapes.

The new focus of our national nature bodies on 'bigger, better, faster' interventions is also leaving behind a patchwork of small nature sites of considerable importance to local people that need lasting protection.

## Our Manifesto

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### The Government can...

Review policies and funding schemes oriented to nature restoration and sustainable farming to introduce incentives and support for community ownership, including enabling the use of the Community Ownership Fund to support buyouts.

10

### The next government should...

Establish Land Commissions for England and Wales, both on a permanent footing with a remit to reform land markets, embed social purpose in land ownership, and promote greater community ownership of land.

## Case studies

### Middle Marches CLT

Middle Marches CLT was founded in 2019 following research commissioned by Natural England and the National Trust into creating more 'stepping stones' between two large areas of land managed for nature and climate resilience. It has already bought almost 100 acres of farmland and nature sites and is negotiating with local landowners to buy more. The CLT has also become a hub of learning and exchange for farmers and landowners, local nature groups, councils and the AONB.



# Land commission

Southwark Council, the Liverpool Combined Authority and the Scottish Government have all established temporary or permanent Land Commissions.

These have been able to stimulate fresh thinking, support change on the ground and make recommendations to local and national governments to achieve better land use.

The House of Lords Land Use Committee has also called for a Land Use Commission with responsibility for creating a land use framework which will help identify and address current and emerging challenges and opportunities for land use in England.

# Manifesto for Wales

## Manifesto to support Community Land Trusts in Wales

In Wales, most powers relevant to the community land movement are devolved to the Senedd - housing, local government, agriculture and forestry.

We call on Welsh MPs in Westminster to support our campaigns to secure further devolution for the Senedd to implement our proposals in Wales. For example, to devolve administration of the Community Ownership Fund and Shared Prosperity Fund; control of the Crown Estate; and powers to reform land taxation.

We also call on Welsh politicians at all levels to make Wales a leading light in the land reform movement.

For a nation whose national anthem evokes the importance of land, it is disappointing to have fallen behind Scotland and England in putting land into the hands of local communities.

Despite a commitment in the current Programme for Government to support Community Land Trusts, there has been little tangible support from Cardiff and very slow progress on the ground. Despite the welcome continuation of funding for Cwmpas' community led housing programme, Community Land Trusts remain locked out of most devolved funds for housing; remain unrecognised by Planning Policy Wales; remain at risk from otherwise-needed leasehold reform; remain sidelined by public bodies developing - or neglecting - public assets.

Let our members, in every corner of Wales, stop envying their counterparts in England and Scotland. Let Wales become the envy of the UK. Let community ownership and agency become commonplace.

# Maniffesto i Gymru

## Maniffesto i gefnogi Ymddiriedolaethau Tir Cymunedol yng Nghymru

Yng Nghymru, mae'r rhan fwyaf o'r pwerau sy'n berthnasol i'r mudiad tir cymunedol wedi'u datganoli i'r Senedd - tai, llywodraeth leol, amaethyddiaeth a choedwigaeth.

Rydym yn galw ar Aelodau Seneddol o Gymru yn San Steffan i gefnogi ein hymgyrchoedd i sicrhau datganoli pellach i'r Senedd er mwyn gweithredu ein cynigion yng Nghymru. Er enghraifft, datganoli gweinyddu'r Gronfa Perchnogaeth Gymunedol a'r Gronfa Ffyniant Gyffredin; rheolaeth ar Ystâd y Goron; a phwerau i ddiwygio trethiant tir.

Hefyd, rydym yn galw ar i wleidyddion Cymru ar bob lefel roi Cymru ar y blaen yn y mudiad diwygio tir.

I genedl y mae ei hanthem genedlaethol yn ysgogi pwysigrwydd y wlad, mae'n siomedig ei bod hi gymaint ar ei hôl hi o gymharu â Lloegr a'r Alban wrth roi tir yn nwylo cymunedau lleol.

Er gwaethaf ymrwymiad yn y Rhaglen Lywodraethu bresennol i gefnogi Ymddiriedolaethau Tir Cymunedol, prin iawn fu'r gefnogaeth bendant o Gaerdydd ac mae'r cynnydd ar lawr gwlad yn araf iawn. Er gwaethaf parhad y cyllid ar gyfer rhaglen tai dan arweiniad cymuned Cwmpas, sydd i'w groesawu, nid yw'r rhan fwyaf o gronfeydd datganoledig ar gyfer tir ar gael i Ymddiriedolaethau Tir Cymunedol; nid yw Polisi Cynllunio Cymru yn eu cydnabod; mae diwygio cyfraith lesddaliad, er mawr ei angen, yn parhau'n risg iddynt; ac eilbeth ydynt i gyrff cyhoeddus sy'n datblygu - neu'n esgeuluso - asedau cyhoeddus.

Gadewch i'n haelodau, ym mhob cornel o Gymru, roi'r gorau i fod yn genfigennus o'u cymheiriaid yn Lloegr a'r Alban.

Gadewch i Gymru fod yn destun cenfigen y Deyrnas Unedig. Gadewch i weithredu a pherchnogaeth gymunedol fod yn gyffredin.





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