

Stroud Common Wealth

Community Farm Land Trusts

*Enabling the development and establishment of community
farm land trusts primarily for the purpose of sustainable
agriculture and horticulture, controlled by and for the benefit
of local communities*

Final Report

April 2007

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What are Community Farm Land Trusts?

A CFLT:

- Provides a mechanism for the democratic ownership of farm land and related assets by the community
- Ensures permanently affordable access to farms for farmers
- Retains farmland for farming, horticulture and related enterprise
- Allows community access, and range of benefits



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1 Summary

The Stroud Common Wealth Community Farm Land Trust project has:

- Researched case studies and good practise
- Established a forum for collaboration, learning and action between farmers, community farm initiatives and other supportive organisations
- Worked closely with 3 community farm projects (Fordhall, Wye and Wyre Orchards - learning by doing
- Supported the development of 7 potential new land trusts (Tan House Farm, Stroud Slad Farm, The Cornwall Land Trust, Land Roots, Soil Association Land Trust, Biodynamic Association Land Trust, and Little Bromley Community Land Trust)
- Run a Community Farm Land Trusts Action Research conference (November 2005)
- Run 3 seminars: CFLT as a Succession Option, CFLT Policy and Practice, CFLT a route to land reform (CCRU Cheltenham)
- Disseminated learning through a website, talks and workshops
- Produced an [online action pack](#)
- Instigated a range of media coverage of CFLT principally through Fordhall project

Key to the success of the CFLT project has been the triumph of Fordhall Farm where a 'community' of 8500 secured Fordhall Farm in perpetuity as a CFLT. The Fordhall team made excellent use of all media promotion available to them with several features in national papers, and regional television. In consequence, CFLTs and the issues surrounding them have received an unprecedented level of publicity.

The CFLT project continues to receive requests for information and guidance on a range of community land purchases, in particular in the areas of facilitation and engaging with community groups, and technical assistance with organisational structures and finance.

The main **barriers to CFLT** development are

- Planning – in particular for housing on small scale farms
- Finance – Raising capital in short timescales for land purchase
- Land – Available only for opportunistic purchase – little notice of sales
- Community engagement – requires skills and time

Conclusion

This project has contributed to the advancement of thinking around farm land ownership, community access and control, and the benefits that engaging communities in this way can bring in the long term. Together with new partnerships developed over the course of the project we aim to continue this line of action research and go on contributing new possibilities to be considered as we develop a vision for sustainable agriculture, re-ruralisation and localised economies in the UK.

2 Key learning

2.1 What are the main drivers for community farm land trusteeship?

- Securing land near villages, towns and cities for CSA's and new entrant farmers and access for communities. Farms often market directly and are frequently organic - so moving is a problem.
- Capturing land value for community benefits for CSA's e.g. USA - Indian Line Farm (Community Land Trust in the South Berkshires) and Temple Wilton Farm (New Hampshire)
- Market failure - price of farm land greatly exceeds the interest that must be paid for land purchase from the proceeds of farming and land based enterprise.
- Food security for communities in the transition from peak oil
- Provides a vehicle for public to engage with the food and farming issues especially in growing context of energy decent.
 - John Hegley (University of Keele) conducting research into why people bought shares in Fordhall Farm¹

2.2 What Benefits do CFLTs deliver? And do they deliver them?

Jim Sumberg of NEF was commissioned to evaluate the benefits of CFLTs based on a study of literature currently available.

It was concluded that it was not possible to isolate the benefits CFLTs deliver within the changing contexts that they exist e.g. increasing interest in local food and related issues. Each CLT and CFLT project sets out claims to deliver a wide variety of benefits, depending on the context, the community, and the needs and opportunities.

However the key benefit of community land trusteeship that could be isolated is that they do secure land for community benefit in perpetuity, rather than private benefit, and ownership is democratic.

It is too early to evaluate with CFLTs such as Fordhall the extent to which the range of benefits offered are actually delivered, though the farm has been secured in perpetuity for affordable access for farmers, and for the community. With ongoing monitoring and with more CFLTs developing an assessment of their benefits would be extremely valuable. This is a point for future action.

2.3 What has been our learning?

The following is a summary of key learning points from the project:

- Securing land in itself, without viable enterprises and land based activities using the land is not useful or motivating
- Community building and social learning around land-based projects is an essential part of developing CFLTs. It is not just a technical, legal or financial and business question. Real community ownership or trusteeship develops with engagement.
- Whole systems interventions for community and capacity building can work very powerfully if the processes are well designed and facilitated, as opposed to just technical and business assistance.

- People are highly motivated by opportunities to co-create the future of their community, will take responsibility, will contribute and can learn when they see clearly how their input can lead to a difference.
- Preserving the countryside, the landscape, family farms and access to walks, wildlife and open space is more motivating for people to support CFLTs than the concept of land trusteeship.
- Getting support for farm buyouts has been much easier than CLT's for housing, where there may be perceived benefits for individuals, rather than benefits for the whole community.
- It is early days for CFLTs – there is widespread ignorance of the CLT option, and more information is needed as well as workshop opportunities.
- Some CSA's have beneficial landlords and do not see the need for an expensive and time-consuming community farmland buy out, as at Fordhall. Wye College Farm plans to raise capital for capitalising a community farm tenancy, rather than a buy out at this stage. If tenure/use of land can be secured in the long term, CFLTs are not necessary.
- Land is very expensive, and it takes a well-organised community group, farmer and or CSA to have the capital ready, given the short time scales of land auctions. So far, community farm buyouts and CFLT buyouts have depended on landowners giving sufficient notice to get organised.
- The County Farm Estates are a crucial asset for young entrant farmers, and should be both maintained and integrated with other rural development activities, policies for sustainable development, social enterprise development and local food and environmental policies. There is a need for research into the current position of the County Farm Estates, to inform policy makers and interest farmers and stakeholders in getting more community benefit from the county farm estates.
- The IPS for Community Benefit legal structure offers an asset lock, charity at law status without having to be a registered charity, and has proved to be very useful for communities to both capitalise their farms (as at Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch) and buy the land and put it into trusteeship at Fordhall. Though the CIC offers similar benefits, the IPS still fulfils its intended function in balancing individual and community interest and initiative.
- Farm succession is a critical point for considering options such as CFLT, as some farmers clearly want their farms to continue as working farms, and question if their non farming family successors want this.
- Where there are no close family members, ageing farmers are interested the CFLT option, particularly, as with the Soil Association Land Trust, and the embryonic Biodynamic Land Trust, they have strong values around organic farming and the countryside.
- The current planning system is a block, especially when intensive CSA's need more people living on the land, as with the Village Farm Proposal,ⁱⁱ though in Scotland there is growing support for new Woodlands Crofts. The erosion of tied homes into non-farm related dwellings is an issue. However, Professor Nigel Curry (November 2005: CFLT Action Research Conference) considers that, whilst current rural planning is unclear, there are significant opportunities to widen community access and farm benefits through an integrated

combination of planning, agricultural, economic, environmental measures that potentially can secure some of the benefits of CFLTs without the huge land purchase costs.

- Timely technical, legal, financial, fundraising, facilitation, social enterprise assistance is needed.
- Farmers in financial difficulties, as in the USA (cf Jo Hunt's Churchill research), can be the triggers for engagement with the community around developing CSA's such as box schemes for direct selling. One of our client farmers has been helped in this way by seeing that a variety of enterprises on their land, including a CSA box scheme, can help them through their financial difficulties. This could well be a more widespread trigger for CFLT and CSA development than pioneer/early innovator communities where there is a critical mass of more values driven organic and biodynamic farmers and consumers, or where is a unique farm with a particular history such as Fordhall or Wye Farm, that local people want to continue in a new form.
- As the demand for locally produced food grows, the viability, social, cultural, environmental as well as economic benefits of the various CSA models will become more widely known as options. With more development of successful local food growers and or CSA, will come the pressure to secure farms for permanent local food production security, and for local people to access.
- The essence of community land trusteeship is that land as a 'natural monopoly' is understood as a commons to be stewarded for community benefit, rather than as a commodity to be privatised for private benefit and bought and sold on the market.
- There is no single legal form of CFLT- but trusteeship can be ensured via a variety of legal structures depending on the context, the uses of the land, the community, the nature of the land purchase or gift, and intentions of the donors.
- The taxman sees the clear difference between 'community ownership' and community trusteeship in terms of gift aidable status for the latter.

3 Points for future Action

We have identified the following key areas as having a continued need for support, in particular requiring community facilitation and participatory planning coupled with appropriate technical assistance (business planning, organisational development and legal incorporation).

3.1 Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Supporting the development of community owned and supported farming enterprises.

Example: Stroud Community Agriculture, a Community Co-operative with over 150 members that owns a farming enterprise. It leases 23 acres bordering Stroud, Gloucestershire and 25 acres near the town of Gloucester. Members employ several farmers to produce food. The farmers receive a good, secure wage, and everyone shares high quality, locally grown organic vegetables and meat. There are picnics, shared meals, festivals and children's activities. Members pay monthly for food shares. See: www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org or E: info@StroudCommunityAgriculture.org

3.2 Community Farm Land Trusts

The aim is to provide affordable access to farms for farmers, and the community, through securing farms in perpetuity by a community farm land trust, or other local asset owning charitable body. Farms are special, each with a unique story and sense of place, and the potential to animate the local community through community ownership.

Example: Fordhall Community Land Initiative is a Community Cooperative with 8500 members that bought Fordhall Farm in July 2006 see www.Fordhallfarm.com

See also Plaw Hatch and Tablehurst Farms in Forest Row, West Sussex. The Stroud Common Wealth Community Farm Land Trust project has produced an online resource found at www.cflt.org.uk

3.3 County Farms

County Farm estate managers are under pressure to illustrate the value of maintaining a County Farm Estate. Much could be done to improve this simply by working with existing tenants and local communities, facilitating improved benefits and access. There is a need for research into the current position of the County Farm Estates, to inform policy makers and interest farmers and stakeholders in getting more community benefit from the county farm estates.

Example: High Bickington, Devon (although failed at final planning hurdle!)

3.4 Village Farms

Supporting planning policy changes that enable the development of viable small-scale holdings that serve the direct needs of local communities and that are accessible to villages and towns. This policy change would recognise the benefit of reducing farm sizes in the right circumstances, with tied housing for farm workers.

Example: Felin Uchaf Farm on the Llyn Peninsula, NW Wales, E: felinuchaf@tiscali.co.uk; and Simon Saggars, Guilden Gate, 86 North End, Bassingbourn, SG8 5PD, T: 01763 243960 and or Simon Fairlie chapter7@tlio.org.uk, T: 01460 249204. See Appendix - Pembrokeshire Planning Guidance.

3.5 Community Woodlands and Orchards

Develop accessible woodlands and orchards through community ownership with direct local links to their productive use.

Example: Wyre Forest Community Land Trust. Case study to be added to CFLT website.

3.6 Evaluating the benefits

There is general agreement that the process of community engagement in CFLT initiatives does potentially deliver lasting benefits however this evidence is subjective and entwined within an ever changing context. There is a need for long term monitoring of developing initiatives providing a basis for future evaluation and recommendations for their ongoing support.

4 Financial report

Summary from 1 August 2005 to 31 March 2007

Balance at 1 August 2005 599.73
599.73 Contribution from Stroud Common Wealth 599.73

Receipts

Sales			
	Conference Fee Income	2,450.00	

			2,450.00
Other income			
	Grant Income	43,000.00	

Carnegie Trust UK	18,000.00		43,000.00
Tudor Trust	25,000.00		-----
			45,450.00

			46,049.73

Payments

Purchases			
	Steering Group	609.20	
	Conference	6,917.40	
	Purchases of goods	26.00	
	Prof Advice and Incorporation		
	Fees	2,100.00	
	Telephone	15.84	
	Stationery	7.38	

			9,675.82
Cost of sales			
	Admin Support	1,134.79	
	Project Management & delivery	9,132.84	
	Financial Management	249.20	
	Project Contributors	17,369.17	

			27,886.00
Office			
	Project Leaflet	399.66	
	Telephone/fax	59.56	

			459.22
Travel			
	Travel	695.04	

			695.04
Professional fees			
	Plunkett administration & support	1,000.00	

			1,000.00

Finance charges			
Bank charges		128.32	

			128.32

			39,844.40

Balance at 31 March 2007			6,205.33

In addition the project will receive a further £1000 from Carnegie Trust UK on submission of this report.

5 Ongoing work – proposal to Tudor

The CFLT project recognises that this surplus is largely due to the support of the Tudor Trust. If income from the conference and initial contribution by Stroud Common Wealth are taken into consideration, the balance to account for is **£3155.60**.

The project has several accrued obligations to complete with funds carried over the project period which include writing of this final report and final updates to the project website. In addition there are a number of activities we have in principle committed to, but recognise we need approval from Tudor Trust to complete the project in this way. This is presented below:

Activity	Cost
Accrued obligations:	
Legal advice, Co-operatives UK - outstanding fee	500
Facilitate Biodynamic Land Trust seminar (June20/ 21st, 2007)	900
Briefing Papers (In draft - needing completion)	
Farm succession	600
Raising finance	
CLT health check	
Organisational structures for CFLT.	
Website – Final update of content	300
Project management	600
Report writing	600
	3500

Additional Activities:	
Ongoing telephone and e-mail support and advice	600
Case studies – Complete and add to website: Felin Uchaf, Wyre Forest Stroud Slad Farm	600
CFLT conference hosted at CCRU (to include launch of CFLT website/toolkit), September 2007	2000
Input into proposals for ongoing support and research	600
	3800
Total	7300

5.1 Further Details

Ongoing telephone and e-mail support and advice

For the duration of the project (and beyond) we expect to continue receiving requests for information and advice.

Case studies – Complete and add to website: Felin Uchaf, Stroud Slad Farm, Wyre Forest

These are three very different models, one a CFLT owned by a collective of farmers and members of local community to explore ways of living and working sustainably in the farm setting. See www.felinuchaf.com.

And Stroud Slad farm is a new model of Community Supported Agriculture with many autonomous but interdependent enterprises hosted on one farm, with a close link to a supportive community/customer base. A model which has potential to appeal to a wider range of farmers and land owners.

CFLT conference hosted at CCRU/Rural Institute (September 2007)

We have identified this as an opportunity to ‘sign off’ the project. Based at the new CCRU (in full), Cheltenham, this is a central location with good transport links from around the country.

The aim of the event will be to provide practical information and advice for communities wishing to establish land trusts, and to launch the online toolkit. This will be supported with a national media promotion – press release, and each a wide cross section of policy makers, local authority regeneration, economic development officers and rural development enablers.

Input into proposals for ongoing support and research

This project has contributed to the advancement of thinking around farm land ownership, community access and control, and the benefits that engaging communities in this way can bring in the long term. We have developed relationships with several key potential partners to continue a line of action research and contribute new possibilities that could be considered as we develop a vision for sustainable agriculture and localised economies in the UK. Potential collaborators include:

- New Economics Foundation – Developing proposal to assess state of County Farm Estate nationally and of productive green spaces available to communities (Kari Ward)
- Commission for Rural Communities – Have a programme on 'connecting rural communities and the land'. Aim is to understand the connectedness of rural communities and society to the land, and its significance for the distinctiveness and sustainability of rural England, and to identify ways of establishing or maintaining positive connections. (Dr Peter Caruthers)
- URGENCI – An international/European CSA movement – International/European exchange, research and shared learning
- CCRU - Countryside and Community Research Unit, Rural Institute, University of Gloucestershire
- Countryside Commission
- SWAN: Network of Rural Community Councils in the SW

6 Appendices

6.1 Summary of Project activities

Establish a forum for project collaboration

Website

All learning from the CFLT project has been captured as an online 'Action Pack'

www.cflt.org.uk

Establish steering group

The following group have actively participated with project events and consulted throughout the project:

Peter Caruthers – Rural Analysis, Commission for Rural Communities
George Dunn – Farm Tenants Association
David Evans – National Trust
Joy Greenall – Earthcare consultants
Charlotte Hollins -Fordhall farm
Bernard Jarman – Biodynamic Association
Martin Large – CFLT project
Mark Measures – Organic farming consultant
Bob Patterson – Salford University/Community Land Trusts/Housing
Greg Pilley – CFLT project
Andrew Scott – Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch CSA farm

Action Research Conference

We were very pleased with the results of the conference with a good representation of practitioners and interested organisations. The main effect of the conference was to introduce and open up the debate around CFLTs, and a great deal of issues were identified and aired. The main conclusions drawn were:

- A key blockage to CFL Trusteeship is the inflated price of farm land.
- Farm land prices are inflated by 'hope development value', the 'estate value' of a farm, the value of houses on the farm land, the diversification value of the potential of non farm businesses on that farm, the effect of EU area payments and so on.
- There are a wide variety ways in which community farm land trusteeship is already practically implemented in Britain.
- The concept of community land trusteeship in its modern form originated with John Ruskin, who founded the Guild of St George in 1871.
- There needs to be a clear separation between community interests and those of the farmers and farm business. This needs to be in the form of a clear lease/tenancy agreement between the farm business and the farm land trusteeship body.
- There are a wide variety of legal structures used for preserving community farm land trusteeship – open membership, democratic charities such as the National Trust, not for private profit companies limited by guarantee, Industrial and Provident Societies for community benefit which can be charities at law.

- Farming Succession is a key issue to address to ensure ongoing land trusteeship.

The collective thinking of the conference has been captured and presented as a conference report. The intention is to further refine this report into three separate documents:

1. An ongoing strategy for the CFLT project (this is the ongoing task of the project steering group)
2. A policy document – key recommendations and support needed for developing CFLTs – referred to as the ‘report’ in table of activities above.
3. An Action Pack – distilling the practical information such as case studies,
4. Organisational structures and support available currently available from website.

Establish farm land trusts using novel co-operative structures

The CFLT project, to date, has been working almost exclusively with Fordhall farm and the Fordhall project. We are now organising a CFLT workshop for Stroud Community Agriculture, and have been approached for assistance by Land Roots (www.landroots.co.uk) an establishing CFLT.

Also of significance is the potential for CFLT to work in partnership with existing land trusts such as the National Trust and Wildlife Trusts. This could be through co-ownership, or through the facilitation of community purchase of land contiguous to the Trusts holdings and interest.

Facilitation of land trust organisational planning meetings

To date we have facilitated 3 planning meetings for Fordhall. This has resulted in the incorporation of the Fordhall initiative and the launch of a fundraising appeal through shares, gifts and grants.

Structured business plans, with aims and principles

Fordhall was successful in drawing down Leader + funding to support a full time project development post. They have also received Defra funding to produce a feasibility study/business plan for the farm and its wider enterprises. The CFLT project continues to support the business planning process. Bob Patterson of Salford University was brought in to help Fordhall consider the options for realising best value of the farms assets to repay any loan finance, and allow the farmers to invest and realise equity in the long term. The initiatives board were invited to a meeting with Bob, which doubled up as a capacity building exercise for the interim board.

Our work with Wye community has also guided the development of their business plan/proposal for community tenancy of the University farm.

Number of grants given and land trusts incorporated as co-operatives constitutions and member agreements

We have assisted with Fordhall's incorporation, which is now a Society for the Benefit of the Community, IPS. This was with the assistance of Co-operatives UK. Much time was spent supporting Fordhall in considering the finer detail of their objects, which has now enabled them to register as an exempt charity, and claim gift aid. The key point which enabled this was the use of the term community ‘trusteeship’ rather than ‘ownership’.

These details will be captured in the organisational structures advice of the action pack.

Produce an 'action pack' - Community owned farm land trusts

An Action Pack – distilling the practical information gleaned from the project. such as case studies, organisational structures and support available has been made available via www.cflt.org.uk website.

Promote concept of community farm land trusts and resources available

Produce a project leaflet

Project leaflet has been produced, and used to promote the project and conference. This is being further disseminated through conference participants.

Press releases - centred on established/establishing initiatives

Fordhall

The Fordhall Initiative has received an astounding amount of media interest with almost weekly articles in their local paper and several national stories to date including the Farmers Guardian, Independent, Soil Association Living Earth magazine, The Observer, Countryman and The Daily Telegraph. BBC Radio 4: Farming Today-September 2005

The Fordhall initiative is to be the subject of a regional BBC TV programme and a documentary series to be shown in September 2006.

Charlotte and Ben Hollins spoke at the 2006 Soil Association conference.

Conference

Prior to and following the conference we released press releases. An article resulted in the Social Enterprise magazine.

6.2 Pembrokeshire Supplementary Planning Guidance

Supplementary Planning Guidance: Low Impact Development Making Positive Contribution, SPG (1) Joint Unitary Development Plan for Pembrokeshire, Pembrokeshire National Park, 26 June 2006 : see CFLT [Action Pack](#) on web site

6.3 References

ⁱ 1. John Hegley is currently testing a Research Questionnaire, and works at the University of Keele

ⁱⁱ See Simon Fairlie and Simon Saggars, Village Farm Proposal, on the Stroud Common Wealth Web Site in the Action Pack:

Other References

Community-based land reform: Lessons from Scotland, (2005) Land Use Policy, Elsevier. Bryden, J, Geisler, C.,

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Highland and Islands Enterprise (2003) *Community Land Ownership Hunt, J.* 'The development and viability of Community Supported Agriculture in the United States: a local food system capable of transfer to organic farms in Scotland?' Scottish Agricultural College, September 2002

[Supplementary Planning Guidance](#): Low Impact Development Making Positive Contribution, SPG (1) Joint Unitary Development Plan for Pembrokeshire, Pembrokeshire National Park, 26 June 2006