



Stroud Common Wealth Community Farm Land Trust Project

Briefing Paper

What are Community Farm Land Trusts?

Community Farm Land Trusts are a type of Community Land Trust (CLT). Community Land Trusts (also known as community or property/asset trusts) are established as a mechanism for the democratic ownership of land (and property) by a community.

Community Farm Land Trusts are established *primarily for the purpose of sustainable agriculture and horticulture, controlled by and for the benefit of local communities*. They:

- Ensure permanently affordable access to farms for farmers
- Retain farmland for farming, horticulture and related enterprise
- Allow community access, and range of benefits

Why establish a CFLT?

CFLT's provide a range of benefits and opportunities.

Key features of CFLT's are that they:

- de-commoditise land (i.e. the market value of land is taken out of the decision calculus regarding land use and management)
- are run based on open, democratic and cooperative principles

In this way they can:

- support more sustainable agriculture and contribute to the development of more sustainable local food systems
- enable new entrants to get started in agriculture
- ensure the continuation of small farms
- assure community access to productive farmland over the long-term
- empower communities to affect local land use and development patterns
- reconnect the non-farm population to the land and to food production
- protect the natural environment (farmland, biodiversity etc) in perpetuity
- provide access to green spaces near to villages, towns and cities
- provide affordable housing - for farmers, associated enterprises and local people
- farm based workspaces for businesses and create jobs for local people
- catering or other food businesses, using local food

Establishing a CFLT does not necessarily deliver any of these benefits to either the community or the environment. The actual benefits associated with any particular CFLT will depend on the context within which it was established and operates its goals and management, and the level of engagement with and by the community.

How are they organised?

We see that a key feature of CFLT is allowing open and democratic control based on co-operative principles. Enabling people to engage in the development process and subsequent management and responsibilities of maintaining the new organisation are essential for long term sustainability. See Briefing Paper – Engaging with Communities, and organisational structures for CFLT for some tips and guidance.

Where do you start?

The purpose of a CFLT is to bring together land and people for the purpose of agriculture and food production. You may have a group of people looking for land, or land has become available, and community ownership a viable option. Either way allowing all interested parties to participate in the development of the initiative is going to be key to success. The role of an impartial enabler, aware of the issues and opportunities is extremely valuable. This is the role Stroud Common Wealth was able to take on through its Community Farm Land Trust Project. See the links section of the CFLT website www.stroudcommonwealth.org.uk/cflt for other organisations that may be able to provide facilitation support.

Finance

The main hurdle for CFLT establishment is likely to be finance. This is the very reason for establishing them! Income from farming currently does not provide enough revenue to cover the purchase costs of land. Capital will therefore have to be raised either through grants, loans or shares. See briefing paper – finance for CFLT for further guidance.