



Bristol Community Land Trust



Location	Bristol
Founded	2011
Legal structure	Community benefit society
Description of services	Developing community-led affordable housing for Bristol residents
Key assets	Twelve houses
Employees	One part-time
Volunteers	Ten part-time
Most important skill set(s) to successfully running the business	People skills
Biggest obstacle to success	Lack of access to finance to fund the business, specifically pre-development funds for next scheme
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Local authority – Third sector funding provider – A sector body
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In the long-term, the CLT has a sustainable business model which will use collateral from completed housing developments to fund future projects – The strength and breadth of board members has been invaluable. This includes expertise in self-build, CLT finance, architecture and representation from a housing association – The city council sowed the seed of business by commissioning a feasibility study on establishing a CLT, and has remained a board member throughout



This case study report provides an overview of the Bristol Community Land Trust (CLT) and describes the factors that are perceived to underpin its success. The findings are drawn from research commissioned by Power to Change and carried out by NatCen Social Research and WPI Economics. More information about the study and additional research reports can be found on the Power to Change website.

Overview of Bristol Community Land Trust

Bristol Community Land Trust (BCLT) was founded in 2011 as an industrial and provident society with the aim of developing community-led affordable housing for Bristol residents. The establishment of the Trust was supported by an initial grant of £40,000 from Bristol City Council who, in response to a shortage of affordable housing, had commissioned a study to explore the feasibility of setting up a community land trust in the city.

BCLT aims to empower the community to provide high quality affordable housing in an economically sustainable way. It successfully completed its first development of twelve houses in 2016 using a 'self-finish' model (in which future residents complete the building work on their own homes). The development (built on a vacant site previously owned by the city council in the north-east of the city) is comprised of five houses rented at affordable rates and seven houses sold under a shared ownership scheme to BCLT members. Using the revenue and collateral from their first project to finance the business, BCLT is in the process of developing its second site, with the intention of building a further 25 properties.

BCLT has a membership of over 400 and is governed by a board of ten volunteers. They have one part-time development officer and are currently recruiting for a part-time administrator.

Success factors for Bristol Community Land Trust

This section summarises the key factors that are perceived to influence the success of the BCLT, based on interviews with those involved in volunteering and working for the CLT. Success factors are grouped according to whether they relate to the business, people involved or the external environment.

Business

Success factors related to the business centred on the availability of finance and the long-term viability of the business model.

Availability of finance

At the pre-venture stage, BCLT received a grant from the city council to set-up the business and fund a part-time member of staff. Being able to fund this post increased BCLT's capacity and was viewed as a 'major benefit', reducing its reliance on volunteers giving up their free time. BCLT also accessed a grant from the Homes and Communities Agency, which was felt to be crucial to the success of the initial housing development, although this required the Trust to become a Registered Provider¹, which raised concerns for BCLT over regulatory requirements and the risk of moving away from its roots.

BCLT also accessed Lottery funding and other charitable grants, and finance from Resonance to build its first scheme through Resonance's lending vehicle, Community Land & Finance CIC (CLFCIC).

¹A registered provider of social housing, is registered with the Homes and Communities Agency and subject to the rules and regulations governing Housing Associations.

Long-term sustainable business model

In the long-term, BCLT has a sustainable business model which will use revenues and collateral from completed housing developments to fund future projects. While reliant on grant funding at the pre-venture stage, the expectation is that the business model will become more self-sustaining in the long term, and has already made progress towards full self-sufficiency. The last three financial years have seen a steady decrease in reliance on grant funding or subsidy. In 2014/15 70-80% of BCLT's annual income came from these sources, falling to 40-50% in 2015/16 and then to less than 10% in 2016/17. BCLT sees lack of access to finance as a big obstacle to overall success and growing the business, and also states that financial management expertise are the skills most important to growing the business. The experience of completing BCLT's first project is testament to this, which involved, "a number of cost and funding crises". BCLT currently holds 20 weeks' worth of liquid reserves.

People

The skills and commitment of volunteer board members, coupled with the capacity brought to BCLT by the employment of a part-time development officer are key factors in its success to date.

Skills and commitment of board members

With only one part-time salaried member of staff, BCLT relies heavily on the commitment, expertise and tenacity of ten voluntary board members to drive the business forward. The strength and breadth of skills board members have brought to BCLT is invaluable, with expertise in self-build, community land trust finance, community-development projects, and architecture as well as representation from the city council and a Housing Association. As this list suggests, it is sector specific skills that BCLT sees as incredibly important to both its successful running and to its growth potential. Should it need to, the board can supplement its in-house skills by commissioning the appropriate professional advice to support its decisions.

The board's commitment of time and energy to the project on an unpaid basis (facilitated in part, by retired board members who are able to commit significant amounts of time to the project) is critical to BCLT's success to date. Indeed, the board played a 'hands-

on' role in project managing the first BCLT housing development, although longer-term the aim is to employ project managers as the business grows and becomes financially self-sustaining. It is also worth noting that BCLT has been proactive in seeking out candidates with particular skill sets to stand for board membership so that knowledge and expertise in certain areas can be developed.

Salaried Development Officer

The capacity to employ a part-time development officer for three days a week (funded initially by a grant from the city council) is important to the success of BCLT. Having a salaried staff member responsible for driving the business forward provides a consistent point of contact, increases accountability and helps to sustain the momentum of the project. As the business becomes more sustainable, the aspiration is to increase the number of employed staff to grow the business.

Community and external environment

The commitment of the city council to the success of BCLT, a partnership with a local housing association and the wider engagement of the community have all played a role in supporting the success of BCLT.

Partnership with a housing association

Since its inception, BCLT has had a strong relationship with United Communities housing association, and this partnership was felt to be critical to BCLT's early success. Represented on the BCLT board by their Chief Executive, United Communities housing association provided initial support by providing expertise and necessary infrastructure including payroll, HR and office space for the BCLT employee. As BCLT has become established and completed its first housing project, the housing association has continued to support the business, providing on-going housing management (for example, rent collection, repair and maintenance services) as part of a service level agreement. This relationship is described as an 'incredible asset' to BCLT with the support and expertise of the housing association viewed as key to the businesses success, particularly in its early stages.

Local authority support

The commitment of Bristol City Council to the establishment of a Community Land Trust in the city was also viewed as key. The city council sowed the seed of BCLT by commissioning a feasibility study into establishing a Community Land Trust in Bristol and has remained a board member throughout. Without the city council providing an initial grant to fund the development officer, and providing the land for the initial project at a cost of £1, the BCLT would not have been possible.

Community membership

With well-attended community meetings and a membership of over 400, the wider community has supported BCLT. This commitment has strengthened BCLT, providing evidence to potential funders of the commitment of the local community and the demand for innovative solutions to the affordable housing shortage in Bristol.

Financial information

The following table provides an overview of Bristol Community Land Trust's income, expenditure and assets for the period 01/04/2015 to 31/03/2016.

Income	£19,137
Expenditure	£18,710
Difference between income and expenditure	£427
Surplus/(deficit) on ordinary activities before taxation*	£427
Annual income from grant or subsidy**	£581,213
Fixed Assets	£1,057,206
Current Assets	
Stocks	£0
Debtors	£14,000
Cash at bank and in hand	£6,791
Total	£20,791
Net Assets	£3,013

Source: Bristol Community Land Trust Accounts 2016, Mutuals Public Register.

*This category was not provided in the accounts. Instead, given that no tax was paid, the difference between income and expenditure was taken as the surplus on ordinary activities.

**Taken as the sum of HCA grant, Bristol CC and Lottery Grant. It should be noted that much of these were for capital projects, and includes a large amount that is related to capital gains that relates to multiple years and is not include in the narrower definition of 'income' used in the first entry in the table.