



Notes from the
HNCLT Community Share Offer Launch Event

Held at The Sports and Social Club
at 7pm on 20/02/2024

www.hooknortonclt.org.uk

We were really pleased to welcome 46 people to our Community Share Offer Launch event on Tuesday 20 February. Attendees were welcomed and offered a glass of Hooky Beer – kindly donated by Hook Norton Brewery, or a glass of wine, Shloer or water.

Cathy Ryan (Chair of HNCLT) opened the evening by welcoming everyone and running through some general housekeeping. Fliss Fox was present as our photographer for the evening and no-one objected to being included in the photos.

Following a brief run-through of the Agenda, the opening of the Community Share Offer was toasted. It was noted that the 1st community consultation relating to the Homes for Hooky project, took place exactly 6yrs ago on Tuesday 20 February 2018 at the Brewery Malthouse Kitchen.

Cathy used a slide presentation to run through the programme. A pdf of the slide presentation can be viewed [here](#).

Community Land Trusts are increasingly popular as they provide communities with the means to come together and have a say in the sort of housing that is delivered, rather than it being dictated by large housing corporations.

Community Shares are an effective way for those Community Land Trusts to raise finance. They are unique to co-operatives and community benefit societies. They provide a good opportunity to support local community enterprises and assets, providing them with the long-term finance they need to develop and grow.

Cathy went on to give a brief summary of the construction, management and allocation of the homes, before giving details about the Community Share Offer. All the details are available in our [Community Share Offer Documents](#)

Tim Lunel noted that investing in HNCLT Community Shares is done via the Ethex platform, which requires an account registration, and a cooling off period of 24 hours ahead of being able to invest. If anyone has any problems with the questions or process, please email hello@hooknortonclt.org.uk

Following Cathy's presentation, the following questions were raised :

1. Where will the income come from to pay interest on the community shares?
 - The business plan demonstrates an annual income of £30,000. This will come from ground rents (HNCLT will retain the freehold of the properties), and the use of the community building, (co-working hub, spare room for rent and 'therapy/meeting room for rent)
2. Will HNCLT be affected by the government's plan to ban ground rents?
 - No, Community Land Trusts are exempt from that plan.
3. What are the main concerns of Board Members?
 - That the valuation of the market sale homes would be lower than the figures in our business plan.
 - Initial valuations carried out recently, show that they are in line with our estimations.
 - That the community building won't be supported enough to provide sufficient income.
 - A community building management team is being set up, and they will be instrumental in publicising the use of the building, including potential evening classes.
4. Is the sale of energy included in the income stream?
 - No, the microgrid investment of £200,000 has been provided by HNLC and SNRG, and returns will go back to them. All participants will benefit from a 10% discount on energy prices (based on the energy price cap).
5. How will you cope with a large number of requests for withdrawal in 2029?
 - HNCLT will be building up reserves in the intervening years from the estimated £30,000 annual income.
 - HNCLT have been very transparent in their plans to offer withdrawals on a first-come first-served basis, once the Board have decided how much capital is available.
 - HNCLT may decide to run another Community Share Offer in the future, to provide further funds.

Mark Childs, Director and Chair of the [Oxfordshire Community Land Trust](#) (OCLT), who provided a lot of help and advice during our share offer preparation period, spoke about OCLT's experience raising funds through a community share offer. OCLT were set up in 2006, secured the land for their first community housing project in 2011, and celebrated tenants moving in in July 2023. They completed their share offer raise last April, having raised a total of £580,000. Mark has first-hand experience of the dedication and commitment needed in order to make community land trust projects successful,

"I will definitely be investing, and we'll shout about it to everybody else"

and praised the HNCLT Board and supporters for their efforts.

Neal Coady, an [SNRG](#) technical product director spoke about how SNRG are helping households and businesses cope with the move to an 'all electric' future. In partnership with Hook Norton Low Carbon they are putting solar PV on the roofs of the homes, and installing a battery to store the renewable energy until it's needed. The energy will be used by the Sports and Social Club, the homes, the community building, and the Hooky Car Club vehicles.

SNRG are working on other projects with Greencore and are committed to playing their part to help the UK reach net-zero by 2050 or earlier.

The microgrid is a unique aspect of the Homes for Hooky project and it has created media interest.

Neal's presentation can be found [here](#).

"The majority of the energy that the participants use, will be coming from the roofs"

Charlie Luxton, director of [Charlie Luxton Design](#) spoke about his involvement from the very early stages of the project, when it was a Hook Norton Low Carbon initiative. He stepped away from the management side of the project when his company won the bid to design the site, and has come back onto the Board now that there is no longer a conflict of interest.

Charlie believes that our relationship with new housing is completely broken. People consider it unfair that a few landowners reap the benefits, and that community members bear the brunt of the additional pressures on community facilities and infrastructure. Community cohesion is at the heart of this design, which was heavily influenced by the community consultations carried out ahead of the design process.

Charlie stressed the importance of projects like this that are needed to tackle the existing problems in the housing market and the lack of homes for local people.

"The community now needs to give its support so that the project succeeds and can be seen as an exemplar for other communities"

New housing sites are often built without the community in mind, but these houses are being built because it is what the community asked for and needs. He suggested that this could be through investment, but also by just by spreading the word about the benefits of this project, and by using the community facilities associated with it.

Hannah Barret, from [Plunkett UK](#) (based in Woodstock) spoke about their involvement with the project, having provided invaluable support and advice in the early stages, particularly financial and business plan support. Plunkett UK was set up to provide this type of help and support to people trying to set up community owned businesses throughout the UK.

Hannah stressed that community groups create benefits that ripple out way beyond the original intentions.

She quoted some national investment figures :

Over £210,000,000 has been invested into community shares, by 130,000 people.

Hannah noted that community businesses create

benefits that aren't necessarily visible on a business plan, but they ripple out when the project gets going. These include individual, community, social, economic, and environmental benefits.

"Community Shares are a fantastic mechanism for supporting communities, and are a really reliable form of financing for community projects"

Plunkett supports their membership of 750 rural community businesses, and will continue to do so along with other organisations like Cooperatives UK, so this should give HNCLT and its investors that they will always have help and support available to them.

Plunket knows that community business are generally very resistant business models, with a 5yr success rate of 99% (dropping to just 92% after 20yrs), making investment a secure option. In the private sector, the 5yr success rate would be 40% for a small to medium business.

“Community Shares are a long-term sustainable model of business and investment”

Liz Sparrow spoke on behalf of [Hook Norton Parish Council](#), who have supported the project right from the start. Liz took us back to 2012, when the initial steering group started working on the [Hook Norton Neighbourhood Plan](#), which was finally adopted in September 2015. Housing was one of the 5 main themes of the Plan, with several goals associated with that theme, such as - providing truly affordable housing to enable young people and those on lower incomes to live in the village; providing a limited amount of housing with preferential access to those with a local connection; and maintaining and enhancing the sustainable community and the natural built and historic community. These goals are now being addressed by this project.

Cathy thanked each speaker and noted that during the consultation process, people were asked what their hopes and fears were, and one of the hopes that came up frequently was that the homes would go to people with a local connection. We have managed to ensure that, through our [Allocations and Lettings Policy](#), which was approved by Cherwell District Council, and the Hook Norton Parish Council.

The biggest fear was the ‘it will never happen!’. It was suggested that people often come forward with ideas like this, but they never get off the ground. We are thrilled to be in the position where this project has not only got off the ground, but is clearly on its way to completion.

Cathy ended by saying how inspiring it is that community land trusts are forming all over Oxfordshire and beyond, as they offer a fantastic way of making sure that the needs and opinions of local people are included in housing decisions. The message that she would like to pass on to any other groups thinking of starting a similar project is to “never give up”. The project has been a roller coaster experience, with some problems appearing to be insolvable, yet solutions have always been found.

Questions arose at that point, including the following:

1. Will people have to have a local connection to purchase one of the Market Sale homes?
 - HNCLT will be prioritising those with a local connection, and initial marketing will be localised.
2. Who pays for maintenance of the solar panels?
 - SNRG
3. Has any rent been set yet?
 - Soha will set the rents, and they will be no higher than the local housing allowance.

Cathy thanked everyone for coming and suggested that people continue discussions in a casual manner with another drink.