

News October 2021

A big welcome to Paul

We're thrilled to bits to welcome Paul Brannigan as the CLT's Executive Manager, our first member of staff. Paul began working on Monday Oct 11. We've planned a fairly detailed induction programme for Paul for his first few weeks in post, and we hope to introduce him to as many of our members and supporters as possible as soon as we can.

What we've been talking to the council about!

Jerusalem Farm is the campsite and outdoor centre in the beautiful Luddenden valley which is run by Calderdale council and is much enjoyed for its peacefulness and attractive countryside. A cottage attached to the centre has been empty for some years, and we've been talking to the council in recent months about ways in which the CLT can lease the cottage and in turn arrange for it to be tenanted.

We're pleased with the progress we've made and all being well Calderdale's Cabinet will give the plan the green light very early in 2022. In the meantime, a formal 'Open Space Notice' announcing the plan has been issued. If you see the Notice in the Halifax Courier and wonder what it means, please relax! – nothing else at Jerusalem Farm will be changing. (It's not being sold off!)

Living in the centre of Hebden Bridge

At the same time as the discussions have been progressing regarding Jerusalem Farm, we've been having very similar conversations with Calderdale about two empty flats above a shop in the centre of Hebden. We can now let you know that the properties in question are in fact in Crown Street.

Again, we hope that we will be able to arrange to lease these from the council and put CLT tenants in. What we'd really like to do is to make the flats exemplars of retrofitting. To this end (as we mentioned in a previous mailing), we've applied for some grant-funding from the new Zero Carbon fund being run by Calderdale Council and the Community Foundation. Our fingers are crossed that our bid will be viewed favourably – we expect to hear soon.

Central Todmorden development update

We can't always expect everything to be plain-sailing. We've just been told that Todmorden Town Board has decided to remove our proposal for groundwork and feasibility funding for affordable homes on the old health centre site in Rose St from the package of projects (hopefully) being funded via the Todmorden Town Fund. (To be fair to the Town Board, the government shrank the originally proffered £25m to £17.5m, so there's inevitably been pain in trying to decide where to make the savings.) We still hope that in due course land near there can be used for town centre housing for local people in housing need, but at the moment we're pausing for breath on this one.

Hebden Bridge decision soon

Gwen, a CLT member (and indeed one of our former trustees), met one of us the other day on the 590 bus to Halifax. So what's the latest about the High Street site in Hebden, she asked?

The answer is that big things have indeed been happening. We've just heard that we are successfully through the first round of a Brownfield Housing grant application process with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (if we'd failed to get through, the project would probably not have been financially possible).

We know that there are very many people locally who were rooting for this project when it first went to planning in 2019. On the other hand we had a group of local people who were opposed to our original plans, and of course that hurt. We've completely revised the plans, moved the proposed development much further away from Bridge Lanes, and we genuinely hope and expect that our revisions will be able to satisfy all those with concerns last time.

The trustees will be taking a firm decision next month on whether we feel we can safely proceed to put in a planning application (if so, this will happen quite soon). Construction costs have been going up a lot recently, so a decision to proceed has to be taken very cautiously. Fortunately, by partnering with Connect Housing we're not in this project entirely on our own.

All being well, we expect to be arranging drop-in consultations to show you the revised plans very shortly.

We're off to see other CLTs

We think it's important that organisations in the community-led housing movement learn from each other, so we've taken the opportunity of Paul's induction to arrange trips away to talk to other CLTs. Over the coming weeks, Paul and several CLT trustees will be visiting three CLTs in inner-city Liverpool, the Community Housing Trust in Keswick (now with four developments on its books!), passivhaus experts Lune Valley CLT and the next-door Lancaster Co-housing development, and the small market town of Wooler near Berwick-on-Tweed where a community trust has revitalised a once-rundown local community.

And in turn we're continuing to be asked to share our own experiences: next up is the launch early next month of Swanage Community Housing in Dorset where our Secretary Andrew has been asked to say a few words (by zoom) about our own background and development. (It so happens that their chair Robin Sutcliffe used to live in Heptonstall!)

Signal box progressing

We're pleased to say that things are moving forward with the proposed community asset transfer of HB signal box into CLT custodianship. Karin our Treasurer and Jacquie our architect met a group of Network Rail staff recently, to check that everything still needed by NR had been safely removed from the box. We still envisage signing the legal agreement with Network Rail later this year (and that will then mean we can start recruiting our heritage project officer, the nine-month post funded through National Lottery Heritage Fund).