Brighton & Hove Community Land Trust

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

www.bhclt.org.uk

A note from Katie Reilly on behalf of the board

Resilience is the theme of the past year. The cost of living has increased, the weather more extreme and global tensions continue. In the face of these challenges, people-led action and community activity continues to grow as we survive and recover, building resilience together. Here in Brighton, existing and new community-led housing projects are growing and the CLT's Board of Directors has seen some change, with familiar faces stepping down and new directors bringing a fresh energy. This report gives a taste on what we have collectively achieved across the past year to grow community-led housing in Brighton, and we look forward to building relationships old and new as we navigate implementing our mission across the next year.

Our mission

We are a grassroots movement, enabling and campaigning for community led housing (CLH) development in Brighton & Hove, inspired by our large and diverse membership of local people who we are accountable to, as well as the wider community.

Our vision

Our vision is of a city where all current and future residents, regardless of their income, have affordable and secure housing and where the people of the city have homes that reflect their diversity and creativity. In this vision, local people have control and genuine choice in how they live, and the city makes the best of its resources.







We support initiatives leading to:

• fairer access to stable and secure housing that enables well-being and is genuinely affordable

• vibrant and diverse neighbourhoods that play a positive role in their local and wider communities

• positive contributions to the environment and low carbon solutions that limit our impact on the planet

• creative innovation for different ways of living, working, and playing together sustainably for the 21st century

How we do it:

Self-help and mutual aid

We believe that people in communities have the power, knowledge and experience to collaborate with each other to make positive change. Through mutual care we contribute to individual and collective well-being.

Local focus

We promote the local economy and support a vibrant urban life that is open and welcoming to others.

Artistic expression

We encourage celebration, creativity and fun in cultural expression.



Learning by doing

Everything we do is a learning experience, for individuals, groups and wider communities. We think it is important to reflect on our actions, and ensure our learning is captured and shared.

Our work is currently shaped around four different strands which we monitor and follow through a document we know as our Really Useful Plan.

Projects

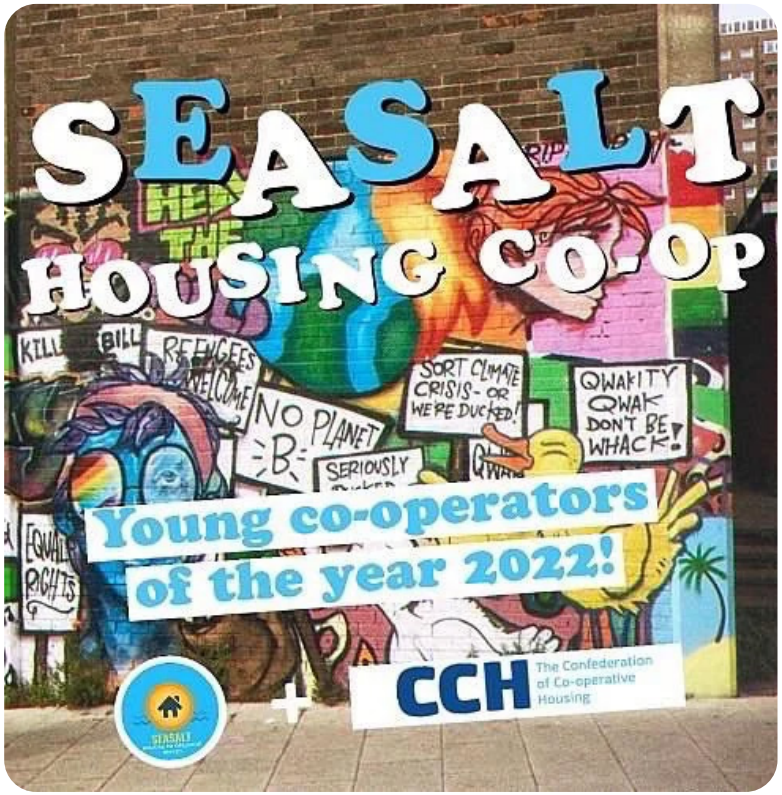
46 Appledore Road - being a creative and productive freeholder through our partnership with SEASALT

The priorities that we've established for this project, since buying the property in 2021, are:

- to continue to build our partnership with SEASALT and establish shared responsibilities and clear lines of communication
- to finish the major renovation work that we planned, with a particular focus on accessibility and energy efficiency
- to support SEASALT to become a great organisation
- to ongoingly share and celebrate what we've achieved, with a particular focus on keeping our investors updated. We also still plan to consider if and how we can repeat the project, particularly in the current economic circumstances.

This year, we continued to carry out the restoration and repair work to the property that was planned when we purchased it in 2021. This has now been completed apart from two outstanding areas of work: a disabled access ramp and additional insulation in the roof.

We have installed a temporary moveable ramp built in wood by a friendly volunteer Joleon Leversuch. The residents report that it is working well and gives us a breathing space to address the provision of a more permanent structure.



During the year, we carried out an evaluation of the project (the detailed report is available on request). We considered the possibility of expanding the numbers of properties but decided that market conditions and our capacity were not right at the time.

We organised two workshops to look at the relationship between BHCLT and SEASALT going forward and instigated regular on-line monthly meetings between members of the board and members of the Co-op.

Like many, we have been impacted by increasing mortgage rates over the course of the year, which have put our already tight budgets under increasing strain. In September we increased the rent to SEASALT by 3% after a careful and extensive discussion between BHCLT and SEASALT. This meant we ran a slight deficit budget on the project for the year, as well as reduced our own overhead contributions. However it was important to us as an organisation that we kept rents as affordable as possible, especially within the context of rapidly increasing energy costs at the time. In addition we as the CLT did not just want to transfer all the responsibility for the mortgage increases onto SEASALT and therefore the tenants, which we often see happening in the private rental sector. As the asset is ours, any benefit that accrues from the asset is in the majority ours, and therefore we should also take more of the risk.

Despite these financial challenges, we maintained the interest that we paid to our investors at 3% and also honoured all requests for share withdrawal.

Congratulations to SEASALT for winning young co-operators of the year at the Confederation of Co-operative Housing annual conference!

Braypool Lane

Braypool Lane was a site that came through the community led housing pathway in July 2022. The CLT decided it was interested in developing the site for community led housing and in October 2022 was selected as the group to put forward a business case to Brighton & Hove City Council. We spent the rest of the year doing initial explorations into the site and building up our proposal, outline designs and conduct a feasibility study. We're looking at a model in which BHCLT develops the site, becoming a Registered Provider of Social Housing through the process, and then forms a tenant management co-operative around the end development.



Create a more active and wider member network, through which learning and knowledge flows

52 new individuals and organisations joined us between April 2022 and 31st March 2023, taking our membership to 705. We kept members updated through a monthly newsletter as well as an active presence on social media, especially Facebook and Twitter.

We are planning for more involvement of members and a series of social events and seminars. From Jan 2023 we ceased our monthly online meet-ups due to a lack of interest from members. However, in June 2022 we enjoyed a session with Thame CLT who in November 2021 received planning approval for 31 affordable homes: 9 3-bedroom houses, 18 2-bedroom houses and 4 1-bedroom maisonettes, all designed to a high environmental standard.

In October, we supported the Brighton & Hove Housing Coalition to develop and deliver their excellent and wide-ranging Action on Homes Conference at the Brighthelm Centre, as well as giving a presentation on community led housing at the event. Videos from the different speakers as well as where to go next are available on the Action on Homes website.

In the latter part of the year, our focus turned to the upcoming local elections in May 2023. We began planning a Hustings to give members and other interested people a chance to ask candidates about their policies and commitments in the area. We also worked



up a CLH Ask that we thought would best embed CLH in the city, including consulting on this with our members and with supportive councillors. We asked for parties to commit to:

- Using community wealth building as a way to look at their own land and property
- Support public lending to co-operatives and community led housing groups to create more affordable homes in the city
- Keep identifying suitable sites for community led housing, including a larger site
- Let their empty properties to co-ops – or other non-profits – rather than private development company.

Without funding to carry out this function, we have not been able to provide the same level of enabling support and advice to community led housing groups. Despite this, we continued to work with existing groups in the city around potential opportunities as well as signposting groups and individuals to relevant resources and support.

Work with BHCC to ensure a positive framework for CLH in the city

We completed our year-long 'Widening the Conversation' project – a series of conversations designed to critically examine and reflect on our relationship with BHCC as a crucial factor in the development of community led housing in the city. The summary of these conversations, and the outcomes from them, can be found here.

We co-ordinated the process by which two small additional sites came through the community led housing pathway and matched these to local CLH groups, to develop initial proposals to develop those sites. The intention of this process is for the CLT to be as shared and collective as possible. We aim to find the best fit of groups to sites at a given time, on the basis that this will be better for the development of community led housing in the city overall.

We supported Bunker Housing Co-operative in their work to secure on-lending from Brighton and Hove City Council on their next development at Dunster Close, which was approved in principle by the Housing Committee in November 2022. This is a potentially transformative proposal that has been a long time in the making and a demonstration of how the council can use its borrowing powers to support the development of more permanently affordable, co-operative housing in the city.

We also worked with TOWN – a profit-with-purpose developer with a focus on community led housing to develop a proposal for a potential Mutual Home Ownership scheme on a complicated council-owned site.

We continued to think about Community Wealth Building and how this could support a different approach to land and property in the city. We also carried on our partnership with the University of Brighton to develop our Who Owns Brighton project – developing crowd research into some of the critical issues around housing and land in the city. And with the approach of the local elections, we started to reach out to explore how potential candidates from each of the parties might support more community led housing in the city. This culminated in the Hustings described above.



Ensure BHCLT runs well as an organisation

We aim to organise the Community Land Trust in a non-hierarchical way. There is no Chair of the board. Our constitution requires us to have a Secretary and a Treasurer, but apart from this the Board Directors have no defined roles although each director takes certain responsibilities.

The board has realised the need for more directors to help in the development of our aims as our sources of funding are diminished. We recruited new directors at the 2022 AGM and have continued to reach out to other new directors.

Throughout the we year we tried to find new sources of funding, including applications to the BHCC Communities Grant, the Community Knowledge Fund, Sussex Community Foundation, University of Brighton but were unsuccessful in these. We therefore had to explore the option of losing the support of our paid Hub Co-ordinator and the possibility and consequences of becoming a fully volunteer-run group. In the light of this, we discussed and agreed our 2023-24 budget and made contingency plans for future lack of funding.

Directors throughout or for part of 2022 have been:



Katie Reilly

Katie is an architect and urban designer. Previously a director member of the Oxford-based architecture cooperative Transition by Design she specialises in community-led housing, people-centred design and affordable housing for tricky urban and rural sites; and alternative governance structures.



Paul Chandler

Paul joined the board in September 2021. He has been active in local politics all his life and was first elected as a local councillor in 1984. Now retired, he has been involved in running various businesses as well as volunteering with local organisations, including 3 years with the Citizens Advice Bureau, where at least one third of the problems that they dealt with were linked to housing.



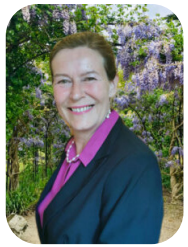
Peter Clarke

Peter is a founder Director of BHCLT who has been working as the Trust's Treasurer. He is also a founder member of South Downs Eco Housing Co-operative with experience in building and architecture, community development and administration of grant-funded and community-led programmes. Peter is due to retire before our AGM in September 2023.



Sara Winnington

Sara is a marketing professional driven by sustainability values, with over 15 years' experience within a variety of organisations including social enterprises, charitable, dance and theatre. She is also co-founder of a Community Supported Agriculture project called Fork It & Dig It and has worked on fuel poverty projects across Surrey and East Sussex.



Denise Eliott

Denise is involved in the circular economy, as part of a research project at the University of Sussex, as well as starting a new business as a Circular Economy Business Consultant. She has a wealth of experience that she brings to BHCLT, including applying for grant funding, project management – especially in waste reduction projects – communications, and research.



Alexis Alafouzo

Lexi has worked on the frontlines in the housing and homelessness sector for over 5 years and has seen the housing and social inequalities and systemic abuse of the most vulnerable within our communities, and believes that community-led housing is the way out of that cycle of insecure housing. With living costs rising, and affordable housing decreasing, it is crucial that we are active in the housing sector and effectively managing the co-ops we already have, whilst looking for ways of building forwards.



Helen Bartlett

Helen has continued as our Hub co-ordinator a job title that goes nowhere near a proper description of what Helen does for the Community Land Trust. From organising meetings, writing newsletters, prompting ideas and contributing her own she is present in every part of the Trust's activity. She also provides a level of continuity for the board as, with the evolving of the membership of the board, there is always a danger that essential knowledge gets lost. Helen has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the community led housing and co-operative housing movements in the city. Helen was the recipient of the 2022 Housing Cooperator of the Year award from CCH in recognition of her work

Our great thanks are due to Helen and all the members of the board past and present who have enabled us to reach the level of success in our efforts that are outlined in this report.

To learn about the state of our finances please see our Annual Accounts published separately.

Looking forward from April 2023:

- We will have to adjust our policies and ways or working to operate without the help of our much-valued Hub co-ordinator, Helen Bartlett, although we are optimistic that her involvement in our Land Trust will be maintained as a volunteer.
- We will need to develop a good relationship with the new Labour Administration at Brighton and Hove City Council.
- We will support the continued development of the 'Who Owns Brighton' project, which received funding from the Civic Power Fund in May 2023
- We will work together with SEASALT to help develop a sustainable model for a student housing co-op and complete the outstanding works.
- We await with impatience feedback regarding the possible development at Braypool Lane that has been submitted to BHCC for approval.