



Stokes Croft Land Trust AGM 2023

Date: 9th January 2023

Venue: People's Republic of Stokes Croft, 17-25 Jamaica Street, Bristol BS2 8JP

Time: 6.30pm-8.30pm

Attendees: 44 SCLT Members & 5 non members as observers

SCLT Directors in attendance:

Andrew Baker, Aseem Inam (appointed 9/1/2023), Chandra (Moon) Wilby (Co-opted 4/1/2023), Hilary Sudbury, Kathryn Chiswell Jones, Keith Cowling, Lucas Batt, Neil Gokani (Co-opted 4/1/2023), Russell Vaught (appointed 9/1/2023), Theo Cox (appointed 9/1/23)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Introduction from Keith Cowling - Director

Welcome to the SCLT AGM. Although this is not the first AGM it is, quite significantly, the first AGM since the Board approved nearly 400 people into membership after the community share offer. Many thanks to all of you who supported the share offer and without whom we would not be still on the journey towards buying this building.

The Stokes Croft Land Trust (SCLT) was formed in the wake of the Tesco Riot in 2010 and the acquisition manoeuvrings around the Westmoreland House site on Stokes Croft. The inspiration came from the work of People's Republic of Stokes Croft (PRSC) and its motto 'we make our own future'.

SCLT's first share offer was launched in November 2021 and closed at the end of May 22. It was run on the Fundsurfer platform and it successfully raised a total of £221,680 in share capital, including investment from organisations Booster fund (managed by Co-ops UK), Community Shares initiative (managed by Co-operative and Community Finance), ArtspaceLifespace, Invisible Circus and Trinity Arts, towards the purchase price of £250,000 for the building.

The completed finance package will also need to repay an amount of £70,000 to PRSC for its investment in repairs and refurbishment of the building during its current tenancy. SCLT thus still needs to find around £100K to finalise the purchase.

The Way Forward

Even with share proceeds, SCLT still needs to find approx. £100k more towards the cost of building. Owners have offered to make this a short term loan, but at a very expensive rate that matches inflation. While considering this offer, the board applied to the Community Ownership Fund for grant money to reduce the required gap funding. As this bid was not successful, the board is now looking



at alternatives to provide £103,300 which includes some £3000 for working capital.

The Board needs to be confident that members who have invested in share capital are happy to proceed with the revisions to the business plan, which originally did not include any loan finance. Members need to agree that:

- That SCLT will be able to cover the loan finance.
- That the rent SCLT will need to charge PRSC is realistic and achievable.

The SCLT board has submitted an application to Cooperative and Community Finance for a debt facility to cover the required £103,300. This has been modelled at both 6.5% and 7.5% over a 20 year term and based on a 3 month repayment holiday at the start of the loan. Upon purchase the rent to PRSC will therefore need to increase to £28,000 and be subject to rent reviews every 3 years.

Following the AGM the board will carry out online a consultation from members, but would appreciate an indication from everyone present tonight about whether you would support these adjustments to the original business on which share capital was raised.

SCLT now has 397 members. From initial analysis 78% of these members live in Bristol, 63% within 3 miles of this building. From a geographical and administrative point of view, one side of Stokes Croft is in Cabot Ward, the other in Ashley Ward. A total of 36% of new SCLT members live in Ashley ward.

SCLT intends to keep PRSC as the anchor tenant of the building, running it as a community arts facility. A considerable proportion of the space within 17 - 25 Jamaica Street is already allocated for community events and interest and usage have been steadily growing over the last year. Current activities in the building include:

- local group meeting space
- documentary and film screenings
- fundraising events
- theatre rehearsals and performances
- creative workshops
- wellbeing and sports activities
- exhibition and gallery events
- art and magazine launches

PRSC estimates that at least 150 people visit the event space weekly with approximately 1000 individual visits to the venue every month. Elsewhere in the building there is a suite of artist studio spaces, a local internet radio studio, a



screen printing studio and a china decorating studio in which PRSC runs public workshops as well as creating the distinctive Stokes Croft China.

Demand for studio and workspace accommodation around Stokes Croft is strong and rising. There are 11 artist studios which are fully occupied and for which there is a waiting list. Jamaica Street Studios, housed within the adjacent Coach House, also provides accommodation for around 40 working artists.

2. Election of new Board Members

Kathryn Chiswell Jones, one of the Board Members of the Stokes Croft Land Trust, introduced the director induction process. Kathryn was invited to the Board by outgoing director Chris Chalkley.

As a member of the Stokes Croft Land Trust, shareholders have opportunities to vote on who becomes a director. This year we have five fantastic new directors wanting to join the Board, two of whom have been co-opted by the Board on 4.1.23 and a further three whose places via a non contested election are to be ratified by the members tonight. . There are up to 6 places elected by and from the membership on a three-year retirement cycle and 2 places for members to be co-opted to the board and for 2 co-opted places (which need not be members) to the board for specific experience.

The board would like to take the opportunity to thank Andy Burkitt who stepped down as a Director in 2022 and Chris Chalkley who, having assembled the original board of directors, stepped down as a director during the pandemic.

New Board Members Introductions

Russell Vaught

Brings a broad range of skills, including senior commercial and charity sector management, fundraising, marketing, legal, partnerships, strategy, business development, events, community engagement and volunteering. He is qualified in business management and law, and is a non-practising barrister. Russell has extensive experience in property management and related matters, including negotiation, leasehold enfranchisement, leasehold disputes, disrepair, financing, conveyancing, construction and maintenance, tendering, contract and project management. Russell used to live in Shoreditch and has a very personal understanding and experience of the dangers of gentrification.

Chandra Wilby (Moon)

Chandra has experience of managing groups and carrying out training at all levels with a wide understanding of the issues affecting the area. She feels passionately that community ownership and involvement is the way forward for



Stokes Croft. Like Russell, she is passionate about tackling the impacts of gentrification in Stokes Croft.

In her free time Chandra is a musician.

Neil Gokani

Neil is a member of the board of Sirona Care CIC. He has worked as a specialist community paediatric physiotherapist in the NHS for 19 years. He lives in Bristol and serves the local community here in the heart of Bristol. He is passionate about supporting long-term affordable and sustainable local development and as a member of the local community he feels excited to be involved in the development of SCLT.

Both Chandra and Neil Gokani have been co-opted on the board in view of their experience working directly within the community.

Aseem Inam

Aseem lives in Bristol and is a professor of urban design at Cardiff University. Aseem is not only committed to the purpose, aims and values of the Stokes Croft Land Trust, but also has a great deal of experience dealing with under-represented and marginalised groups. Two of the strengths he brings to the board are a powerful research capability into current urbanisation practice and a global perspective on local issues.

Theo Cox

Theo is a member living in Bristol who has spent his career in the social enterprise sector. He has specialised in participatory approaches to organisational strategy and also undertaken work involving social impact evaluation. In his current role Theo runs a small social enterprise engaged in research and consultancy with a particular focus on alternative governance and economics.

Theo recently published a paper focusing on the economics of cooperativism and has been accepted for a new role as a Senior Expert in Economics at Demos Helsinki, one of Europe's leading progressive think-tanks, where he will undertake work focused exclusively on economic transformation. He is passionate about finding alternatives to current economic approaches which are no longer appropriate for society moving forward.

Voting: Members were asked to ratify the appointment of the new directors to the board.

Result: The motion was passed unanimously by members attending.

3. Treasurer's Report and Resolution



The accounts are viewable on the Charity Commission register for those wanting to see them in detail. They were made up while SCLT was still fundraising and before the board drew down the proceeds of the recent share offer.

Balance Sheet

The balance sheets show assets SCLT holds, but there will be no fixed assets until it acquires the building.

At the end of March 2022 there was £1570 in the bank, which was derived from a donation from PRSC to help with the administrative costs of getting the share offer process started. Apart from £350 to suppliers that is all that was on the balance sheet.

Profit and Loss

Income of just over £15000 was derived from a grant from the Reach Fund (just under £14000) and PRSC donation of £2100. Expenditure of just under £15000 was largely on marketing and events for the share offer launch.

SCLT held three events during the offer period, which had a total cost of £2046. We also paid £1500 to get the property valued and spent £3876 on assistance from the Cooperative Assistance Network for professional support in forming the cooperative and mounting the share offer.

Donated finance contributions are split into restricted and unrestricted funds. The grant from Reach was restricted as it was given as funding for specific expenses. Money from PRSC was to finance our administration and support in getting to this stage. Unrestricted funds can be spent on whatever is needed.

2 years ago SCLT achieved charity status, which has helped to reduce the costs of the property purchase.

The detailed numbers are available to view on the website which shows individual payments to people.

The money raised from the share offer was held in an escrow account outside of SCLT's accounting system. It was held safely and since reaching our target has been transferred into the trust's bank account. It will thus appear on next year's accounts and will hopefully be used soon to purchase the building.

VOTING

Vote 1: To approve accounts that have been approved by the board.

Vote 2: to agree to disapply the requirement to have an audit for the financial year to March 2023.

Outcome: Both motions were put to the members and passed unanimously.



Q&A

Q (Hilary). How will the proposed loan be structured?

In the original share offer business plan there was always around £72k which SCLT agreed to pay PRSC in respect of its start-up costs and spend on the building since it became the tenant. Of that amount, £50k is projected to be paid on purchase and the remainder repaid over two years, reducing the impact of higher rent levels.

The loan finance is available on an arrangement to repay over 20 years. At the moment its interest costs are modelled on both 6.5 % and 7.5% interest rates.

Q. What is the shortfall?

£103,351k shortfall includes £3,351 working capital. SCLT could go back to the existing shareholders to see if they can increase their investment level.

As work on the share offer has mainly been carried out by five voluntary directors, capacity has been limited. The key action now is getting permission from the new, widened membership to proceed with the loan. However if members are willing to invest additional money in share capital the loan and amount that needs to be repaid in loan finance could be reduced. A process for exploring this possibility can be created over the coming weeks.

Q. Did we have feedback from the Community Ownership Fund on other, successful projects?

About 31% of the grant cash available went to community benefits societies which had raised community shares - mainly community pubs, but there was a successful project in Bristol – a community centre - so it was unlikely that there would be two such successful projects in Bristol. It appears that, as Zion is already up and trading it was the one that was funded.

Q. As the intention is to keep the existing tenants in place I am wondering about the future relationship between PRSC and SCLT and what safeguards will be in place to protect the tenant?

There will be a proper formal lease.

PRSC is applying for a building improvement grant from the Community Resilience Fund and for that to be successful it will need a 15-year lease. The lease will be drawn up by our solicitors.

Q. How big is the site that is being acquired?

This events space and the shop next door, which houses the PRSC china decorating workshop. there is also a studio for printmaking.

On the other side of the event space is the PRSC warehouse and storeroom. On the first floor there is the PRSC HQ and above that the office of Cargo (an



educational project working with young creatives). Also on the first floor there are a radio suite, a library and a range of artists' studios.

There are 2 storey buildings all around us. PRSC has a 3-storey building.

Q. Will Bristol City Council be giving money to PRSC or just to their friends?

Bristol City Council has opened up a new Community Resilience Fund of £4m which will be shared across Bristol in priority areas and community members will decide what the money gets spent on.

PRSC applied to it for funds to install a new heating system and undertake repairs to the roof and the fabric of the building.

Q. (Russell) Are there any asbestos risks within the building and lease.

There is asbestos present in the corrugated roof sheets, but it is the kind of asbestos (white asbestos) that can be removed relatively easily. There weren't any big asbestos risks identified in the recent building survey, so the board is not expecting it to be expensive to get rid of the asbestos in the building in due course.

Q. Will it be a repairing lease?

It will be a full repairing lease but with scope for both organisations to work together. SCLT will not be responsible for expensive repairs but can apply for funding as a charitable body which may help the repairs bill.

PRSC is the anchor tenant but it sublets to eleven individuals and organisations and hires out other facilities on a sessional basis. The relationship between PRSC and the land trust will be that PRSC will lease the whole building from the Land Trust. It will be Insured by the land trust and costs will be recharged to PRSC.

Q. What is ambition for SCLT going forward?

SCLT's ambition is for members to be involved in the setting of strategy, building the organisation's vision and finding potential future acquisitions of land and buildings. Students at Cardiff University's Architecture School are working on design project around Stokes Croft and researching the ownership of some of the derelict shops.

SCLT's medium term aspiration is to look at studios in the Carriageworks just down the street but once we have a mechanism for buying buildings and managing them for the community, we can hopefully roll out the model as opportunities arise. The board would like to be able to acquire enough local property to allow local people to be central to the debate about what Stokes Croft should become and thus be empowered to be players in the future of their neighbourhood.

Q. What's the Vision for 15 Years.



The assumption is that the land trust has to grow. An organisation with a single building may not be sufficiently resilient but acquiring and stewarding more than one building will improve its sustainability. Land trusts tend to have a vision for the long term. SCLT now has 400 members. We want to get them involved in building the vision for the organisation. In 100 years time the community will still be here and SCLT will have been the long term steward of the local a land and assets that will still be needed by local people.

AOB

Close of official AGM & Members Workshop