

STOKES CROFT LAND TRUST

17-25 Jamaica Street, Bristol, BS2 8JP
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Stokes Croft Land Trust AGM 2023

Date: 16th September 2023

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

Time: 2pm – 4pm

Attendees: 29 SCLT Members & 10 non-members as observers

SCLT Directors in attendance:

Andrew Baker, Aseem Inam, Chandra (Moon) Wilby, Hilary Sudbury, Kathryn Chiswell Jones, Keith Cowling, Lucas Batt, Neil Gokani, Russell Vaught, Theo Cox.

1. Welcome and Introductions – Lucas Batt (Director)

Announcement that SCLT has exchanged contracts on the purchase of the building and is due to complete the sale on 29/9/23.

Thanks were given to:

- Chris Chalkley and the Angels for purchasing the building and selling it to SCLT
- SCLT board for all their hard work during the year
- PRSC who built the community and have run the building since it's purchase
- Members who invested in the share offer and proved the appetite for community ownership.

2. Directors Report – Keith Cowling (Director)

Welcome everyone on this particularly auspicious day in Stokes Croft. After what has turned out to be a very long haul since you and other members entrusted us with your money, we have at last exchanged contracts on our first acquisition and in two weeks will own this building.

As we reported at the last AGM in January, there has been a very long build up to this result. The owners of the building bought it from Elim Church next door back in 2014, as a holding operation until PRSC and other local people could form a new stewardship organisation to take it over. In the event, it wasn't until the autumn of the year before last that Stokes Croft Land Trust was able to launch our share offer and you and other members were able to support our work so generously.

During the financial year that ended this spring, negotiations with the owners of the building, aka 'the angels', gathered momentum. As we understood the ownership details and constraints better and the way in which property

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ownership has been changed and developed by activism in the Croft, many negotiations were held as we slowly developed the heads of terms for the proposed sale. Amazingly, through all the long months of this process, the angels have stood by their original offer to sell us the building for what they paid for it in 2014 rather than the raised value it has now. All the directors are grateful for their generosity and support for community ownership. The maintenance of the agreed sale price has allowed us to include an element in the conveyance which reimburses PRSC for all its investment in renovation the original dilapidated building, strengthening its financial position as our tenants.

As you will remember, our share offer launched in the autumn of 2021 and closed in the spring of last year. We came within £20,000 of raising our maximum target, but some drop out before payment and a decision from the angels that were unable to reinvest some of their receipts from the sale back into the Trust as originally planned, left us with quite a large gap remaining in the funds required to complete the purchase. We addressed this by applying for £100,000 of loan finance support from colleagues at Co-operative and Community Finance. After an in-principle agreement from CCF, we returned to the membership to approve this amendment to the business plan and were given your overwhelming support to proceed on this new basis. Happily, we subsequently received further institutional support for the share offer in the form of equity investments from Coops UK and CCF, which reduce the final loan required to complete the purchase to £45,000.

In parallel with our focus on keeping up momentum on purchase negotiations, SCLT has been working with partners to promote new approaches to the emerging problems and opportunities in the Croft. Urban design students studying under our director Aseem have been undertaking a study of land ownership patterns in the Croft and proposing interventions that mitigate gentrification pressures. We also contributed to the debate about the use of Turbo Island, which remains on SCLT's list of target sites for future community stewardship. Our work on establishing community assets in the Croft was acknowledged last year when community shares practitioners from all over England came to visit our project and hear our plans for countering gentrification in our area.

Our last AGM in January attracted a raft of new and energetic directors, who have transformed the capacity of SCLT to raise funding and prepare for the proper stewardship of local land and buildings. We have been developing a prototype ethical lease for the use of SCLT buildings which will form the basis of PRSC's new tenancy. We have also conducted a range of surveys, safety inspections, and reviews of the building's condition in order to safeguard the value of the asset we will be acquiring with members investments, developing out capacity as responsible stewards and landlords for the long term.

We developed a number of bids for funds to support the repair and improvement of the building, applying to Round 2 of the government's

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Community Ownership Fund and the Council's Community Resilience Fund. We also asked for support from the John James Foundation and the Nisbett Foundation. So far, none of these applications have been successful, but we are hopeful that the completion the purchase will give new impetus to future applications and partnership initiatives.

We have also been preparing for a raft of new research and project work which the current sale will make possible by creating a number of member working groups on different aspects of the Trust's work (what are they?). We hope that lots of you will join these and other similar work teams as we go forward with new projects and improve our governance and community involvement.

The long haul to complete this first acquisition has been punctuated by lots of meetings and dogged administration and negotiations. But today, at last, we can take stock and realise the extraordinary significance of what has been achieved. England has about 450 land trusts, most concentrating on trying to develop decent affordable housing in their communities. Many are bogged down in the bureaucracy associated with access to government funding and almost all are struggling to survive. Many of our local community stewardship organisations in Bristol haven't been able to develop business models that don't rely on continual grant support, which has become harder and harder to find in the age of austerity. Here in Stokes Croft however, we have succeeded without government support, without the need to submit to regulation and without access to cheap land from the council.

And with your help and support, it won't stop here. In the words of PRSC's dictum, 'we make our own future'.

3. Approval of last year's AGM minutes

Members approved the minutes to the AGM held in Jan 23.

4. Treasurer's Report and Resolution

The accounts to March 23 are downloadable from the Website and FCA mutuals register.

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 2023 there was £207,125 of members share capital, raised in the share offer for the purchase of the building.

Profit and Loss

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Income of just over £40, which was a donation and expenditure of £8,240 was largely due to costs of a building survey, tax advice and fees associated with the fundsurfer platform fees.

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 Who do SCLT bank with

Triodos Bank

Q. What is SCLT web address?

[Welcome to Stokes Croft Land Trust - Stokes Croft Land Trust](#)

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. Which other buildings are SCLT looking at?

Talks are with owners of the China Shop and Yard plus Jamaica Street Studios, although these are likely to be sold at full market value. SCLT wants to set up a working sub-group to include members and local people to make suggestions. Once this purchase is completed, we can look to facilitate this. Obviously any new building will require further capital raises and need to be viable propositions.

Q. Focus on marginalised people?

Diversity is important as is community engagement but needs resourcing to make it effective.

Q. What is the plan for the building?

PRSC will have a Fully insuring and repairing lease, they will be the tenants in the building and manage their operations on a day to day basis. SCLT plans to work with PRSC in ways that will support them and may be able to tap into more

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funding than they can alone. SCLT has already paid for various surveys to identify the initial works required in the building.

5. Election of new Board Members – Hilary Sudbury (Director)

The director election process for this year was an online vote, which enabled all members and not just those present at the AGM to vote. There were 80 votes cast from 394 members, double the votes of last years election.

a) Member Director election:

This year there were four self nominations for the member election to the Board, these were Deasy Bamford, Fidel Meraz, Geoffrey Collard and Simon Price.

The two people elected this year to join the board are:

Deasy Bamford and Fidel Meraz.

Fidel had sent some words to be read as he is currently out of the country. Hilary read these.

b) Nominated Representative election:

Sue Kilroe has been nominated by PRSC as their representative on the Board and the votes were unanimous in accepting her onto the Board.

The board would like to take the opportunity to thank Kathryn Chiswell Jones and Andrew Baker who both stepped down as member Directors in 2023.

6. Breakout groups for members – Lucas Batt (Director)

Notes to be typed up for Board use.

7. Introduction to the work of B.Sc. 3rd year students at Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff as exhibited – Assem Inam (Director)

Architecture of Urbanism – Land as a Secret Weapon

The exhibition is of selected student work from a research and design studio at Cardiff University entitled “Architecture of Urbanism: Land as Secret Weapon.”

The architecture of urbanism is the underlying structure, of not only what is visible but also of that which is largely invisible, including city-design-and-

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building-processes and their spatial outcomes. When we closely examine this underlying structure, we realize that one of the most overlooked, and yet most significant, elements is land. Urban land has been shown to turn into a nodal point through which a particular modality of urban development [e.g. financially-wired and profit-oriented] has been encouraged to flourish. According to recent investigative research, land ownership in England is astonishingly unequal with 25,000 people—far less than 1% of its population—owning half the land, so it is heavily concentrated in the hands of a tiny elite. There are many ways to reform this highly unequal and privileged system that is destructive for the city and its ecology.

Architects and urbanists can play an essential role in reforming this system, provided they truly can grasp its fundamental dysfunctionality and have the courage to propose real change. Working in collaboration with the innovative and pioneering Stokes Croft Land Trust in Bristol, this research and design studio carried out deep investigation and creative speculation to design radical imaginaries that are public-facing, community-benefitting, and based on fundamental shifts in patterns of land ownership and occupation.

Within this overall theme, the students worked on 4 projects.

Project 1:

We began by investigating both primarily visible [e.g. buildings, open spaces] and often invisible aspects [e.g. patterns of land ownership and uses] of the site in Stokes Croft. There were two parts of this, one was a walking tour and the other will be an analysis of land records. For the walking tour, students kept a creative record of their own observations [e.g. sketches, diagrams, videos, photographic collage, 3D representations]. For the research on patterns of landownership and uses, students worked collectively to track down public records over the past 10 years or so and created diagrams of land ownership and uses over time.

Project 2:

Working together and drawing from the newly refurbished workshops in Bute Building, students built a model of the entire Stokes Croft area and nearby surroundings. Students discussed and decided on (a) the extent, (b) the scale, and (c) the material for the model. Individual sites, whether built upon or currently empty land, were such that future models of proposed designs can be eventually placed on to them. Architecture and urbanism require us to work

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together across people of different backgrounds and temperaments, so group model-building was a helpful exercise.

Project 3:

Building on projects 1 and 2, Project 3 embodied the notion of “research as practice” in architecture urbanism, in which in-depth and critical understanding of a site and its context is integral to the design process and the propositions that emerge out of this process. Each student prepared a textual and visual analysis of “Land as Secret Weapon” in the Stokes Croft site by focusing on two aspects: (a) consequences of patterns of land ownership and use, including drawing from the readings, and (b) conceptual design strategies that would actually benefit the neighborhood and the community in the future. These could include, for example, shifting from purely profit-driven private ownership and uses towards more community-oriented cooperative ownership and uses, and the design implications at the architectural and urban scales of such shifts. Other examples of such shifts might include retention and refurbishment rather than demolition and replacement of existing structures, community-led rather than developer-led design processes, land uses that include public benefits such as health clinics, community libraries, job training facilities, and small incubators of locally owned businesses rather than the standard profit-driven, gentrifying corporate-owned coffee, bar, restaurant and retail chains.

Project 4:

For the final project, each student proposed an integrated building, open space and design process for their site. Each proposal directly built and reflected upon the preliminary projects. Building upon the rich trove of observations, analysis, readings and conceptual design ideas generated during the preliminary projects, each student proposed a public-facing and community-beneficial program that is based on a fundamental shift in patterns of land ownership [such as a community land trust]. In addition to the suggestions made above, land uses could also include affordable or social housing or other ideas such as community- or roof-top gardens and greenhouses. Primary, though, the focus was on innovative forms of land ownership intertwined with innovative forms of land use.

A second aspect of the final project was its materiality, including its tectonics. Students thought carefully about the construction materials, scale of building, relationship to surroundings, and mutually-beneficial relationship to open space [whether it is the sidewalk in front of the building, a courtyard within the building, a rooftop garden, or something else]. The final project embodied—in

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four dimensions, including the dimension of time—the theme of this unit, “Architecture of Urbanism: Land as Secret Weapon.” There was room for experimentation, innovation and learning within this theme. We worked at multiple architectural and urban scales simultaneously. While the final scales are to be determined later, possible scales include 1;2500, 1:500, and 1:10 [for the technology aspect of the design].

What you saw on the walls and in the model is a small selection of work out of the over 400 research and design drawings that the students completed over a period of 8 months. we hope you enjoyed the exhibition, and were informed and inspired by the students’ hard work and creativity! Thank you!

Close of official AGM & Members Workshop