

**Notes from Brighton and Hove Round Table on the Community Land Bank
Taken by Pat Conaty, 10 June 2010 Brighthelm, North Road, Brighton**

In attendance:	
Karen Gardham, Federation of City Farms & Community Gdns Pat Conaty, Land for People Jeremy Iles, Federation of City Farms & Community Gdns Mike Clark, University of Brighton Cllr Ayas Fallon-Khan, Brighton & Hove City Council Francesca Iliffe, Brighton & Hove City Council Ododo Dafe, Brighton & Hove City Council Jessica Hamilton, Brighton & Hove City Council Jan Jonker, Brighton & Hove City Council Robert Walker, Brighton & Hove City Council Rebecca Fry, Brighton & Hove City Council Gillian Churchill, Brighton & Hove City Council	Hugo Blomfield, Brighton & Hove City Council Keith Arnott, Smiths Gore, contracted land manager for BHCC Reverend Stephen Terry, Chichester Diocese Bill Lucas, Hyde Marlett Gordon Abbey, South Downs Health Trust Jane Terry, Brighton & Hove Sixth Form College Duncan Blinkhorn, CVSF / Lewes Road Community Garden, The Patch Clare Devereux, Harvest / Food Matters Ann Baldrige, Harvest / Transition Brighton & Hove Amyas Gilbert, Moulsecomb Forest Garden Sara Winnington, Fork and Dig It
Apologies:	
Matthew Hewes, Brighton & Hove City Council Bryn Thomas, Stanmer Organics Jeanette Thyrsso, Bevendean Community Garden Neil Ravenscroft, University of Brighton	Ann Boddington, University of Brighton Warren Carter, Moulsecomb Forest Garden Vic Else, Brighton & Hove Food Partnership Jess Crocker, Harvest

Introductions, background and local presentations

Pat Conaty welcomed everyone and explained the purpose of the regional Round Tables being organised. He also set out the draft services that a Community Land Bank could provide including:

1. To promote the wider and more flexible access to land on affordable terms for community farms and gardens.
2. To act as a trusted intermediary and brokerage for land provision between landholders and community groups.
3. To offer (for leased sites) security to landowners and tenants over length and terms of tenancies.
4. To seek to reduce tenure costs and achieve savings on community time and effort.
5. To hold land in trust as appropriate.
6. To develop best practice precedents as model forms of agreement for involving more landowners in provision to meet community needs.

PC also indicated some key findings that are emerging from the 40 interviews conducted to date. He commented first on the interviews in Bristol and among other national bodies. These are that:

- Sources of land: potential for securing land in a diversity of ways for the CLB to facilitate including – meanwhile lease, longer term lease (often renewable on performance), donated land and scope to purchase land in rural areas.
- Public sector response: local authorities are very supportive of the CLB idea and they have land that could be provided for community uses. NHS has been difficult to interview in Bristol and Brighton and Hove.
- Universities have been also very supportive in several regions.
- Private sector corporate response has been guarded – Network Rail cautious, but Green Belt Group is an exceptions and is willing to donate land that in some cases is too small for them to maintain
- British Waterways and Sustrans are supportive and keen to find opportunities to test out the CLB idea in practice.

- Offers of help in kind have been made by both local authorities and universities in terms of compost provision and training and education services.
- Co-operatives UK has developed model rules for a variety of growing groups.
- Model leases for meanwhile or other longer terms have been developed by a range of bodies including the National Trust, DCLG, DTA and some local authorities.

PC said that in the Brighton and Hove area, 11 interviews have been conducted to date including with the local authority, two universities, one housing association, two CoE representatives, four community gardening projects and one corporate body. Some highlights are:

- Brighton and Food Partnership has been established for seven years and involves a wide range of stakeholders.
- The Harvest Project is a five year Big Lottery Fund Beacon project committed to develop local food growing in diverse ways. It has developed a model lease and is working on three sites and has opportunities to develop several more.
- The Harvest Project has had land offered from the Council with only one exception.
- Land locally is in short supply and contested for different purposes.
- Possible sources of NHS land for community food growing at the Brighton General Hospital and the Mill View site for mental health. The Nourish project is working on these possibilities,
- Church of England is generally consecrated and this puts up a formidable barrier to overcome. One exception is unconsecrated land at St. Leonards Church in Aldrington that could have good potential.
- Hyde Martlett Housing Group is very interested in the CLB concept and may be able to assist development.
- There are many indicators of demand for sites locally including a long list for allotments in several areas of the city, demand for land in central areas of Brighton with many people without gardens, a growing interest in CSA and market gardening (perhaps).
- Broad list of community land needs, not just for food growing. These include community gardens for social needs, housing land, leisure and sports, conservation, wildlife, access to the South Down, food growing (private) and food growing (semi-commercial).
- Interviewees can see a role for a CLB but its operations should complement the work of the Harvest project.
- Delays to develop community garden sites are of two types: indecision, internal opposition or slowness within the public sector and external opposition by some communities (worries about noise, security, anti-social behaviour, not meeting local needs, etc).
- Cost of community consultation needs to be factored into the planning. Securing community buy-in is critical.

An outline of their respective work on community food growing were given by Clare Devereux of the Harvest project (Local Food funded project to help people in Brighton & Hove grow their own and eat local produce: <http://harvest-bh.org.uk>), and Cllr Ayas Fallon-Khan, Brighton & Hove City Council

Issues raised in the subsequent discussion included

- getting the private sector to offer land could be through them feeling “shamed” at the lack of use of their land e.g. a development site waiting for use

- however, there could be resistance to offering such land as getting planning permission to use the land is “easier” if they can show the land is derelict. Land owners may be more interested in offering the land once they have planning permission but while they are unable to develop the land
- wider use of land may conflict with food growing (e.g. housing, community use generally, play facilities)

KG asked attendees before to think of one or two organisations with an interest in community gardens and food growing that provide support to community groups or land owners on use-of-land issues. The following list of organisations was collected on post-it notes

RHS Campaign for Community Gardens	Growing Communities Hackney
Sustain	Plunkett Foundation – Making Food Work
Housing Associations – like Hyde Martlett	Universities (Brighton and Sussex)
Green Living Community Project	Local authorities like Camden and Islington
London Food Link and Capital Growth	Garden Swaps (allowing others to grow food in your garden if you are not using it)
Grow Your Neighbours Own Project	Trust for Developing Communities – Brighton and Hove
Give Get Gain project (working with the Harvest project to get young people, 14-16, more involved with food growing and developing initiatives on school grounds)	Harvest Brighton and Hove Food Partnership
Brighton and Hove Food Partnership	Soil Association Land Trust for organic farms and food
Community Land Trusts for housing and other needs locally – 20 plus nationally	Brighton Permaculture Trust
Groundwork groups	Brighton and Hove City Council – Parks Department, Estates and Property
BHCC Sheep grazing project (trying to sell lamb through a local butcher – potential for community support)	National Union of Students (would co-ordinate a national programme for students)
AUDE (Association of University Directors of Estates – UK representative body and an essential contact to be approached)	Brighton and Hove Organic Garden Group (community support help)
Allotment Societies and NSALG	Land Restoration Trust
Food Matters	Bevendean Community Garden (local community agricultural group)
Lewes Road Community Garden (guerrilla gardeners)	Estates Gazette and Property Week (property publications and could support the CLB principles if an appropriate pitch could be made)
Blooms and Wyevale Garden Centres (some of their sites are letting surplus	Nourish and Care Co-ops

land for allotments at commercial rates of £500 annually – but not in Brighton)	
City College Horticultural Department at Stanmer and Stanmer Community Farm	Whitham Community Food Project
Allotments Federation	Site Life – Campaign for communities to use mothballed development sites
British Property Federation	

Break out groups

The participants broke into three groups – two involving groups with land and the third group involving community gardening and food projects.

Each group looked at the supply or demand for land, what the opportunities and obstacles were for using land, and what the role of a Community Land Bank could be

Group One: Landowners

What is the supply of land? What are the opportunities?

- What are the competing priorities for land (council land must serve public interest)
- Need to address the complexity of where council land is managed from – portfolio of which dept?
- Community groups need up-skilling and resourcing – often volunteers work temporarily.
- Community groups may not be aware of need to constitute in order to take on leases – inexperience.
- May be conflict of interest within community for how a piece of land is used.
- Need to have a model for community.
- Landowner may be inexperienced – need to develop a methodology within organisation to deal with this.
- May be an issue with setting up temporary projects on land ear-marked for development. When planning permission is sought the projects existence may influence consideration of the application and therefore put off developers from allowing temporary gardens.
- ? Use Section 106 to require developers to allow community use of land prior to commencement of development.
- Requirement for provision of growing area in new developments i.e. write into planning policy.
- Need to ensure that local people are fully consulted prior to any activity or approval on the land.
- Maybe ‘NIMBY’ preconceptions

What could a national organisation offer – a CLB?

- A national organisation could help make the case for community organisations to landowners.
- Could guide and resource local organisations to support set up of new food projects.
- What national organisations have demonstrated that a CLB could operate best as a national organisation – CPRE? – They work with both landowners and users. GRANNEEN Bank – Bangladesh.
- Identify key obstacles and potential solutions. E.g. definitions by statute – ‘green spaces’ in planning terms excludes food growing?
 - ‘consecrated land’

- 'playing fields' for schools involves designation of a certain amount of flat field per student.
- 'open access'

Group Two: Landowners

Some comments on the CLB concept were made and the group then focused on a brainstorm of obstacles and opportunities for developing the CLB.

The overarching comments and observations were:

1. The word 'bank' in the CLB name is unclear and confusing and also it maybe problematic and put people off in the wake of the banking crisis.
2. There is a shortage of land in Brighton & Hove and this leads to contests over land usage for what land is available. This is a big issue.
3. Be worth considering the Scandinavian 'home-zone' model which incorporates growing space in new developments.
4. CLB issues – who is to own the land and who is to maintain it?

The brainstorm teased out a long list of obstacles and opportunities for the CLB initiative:

- Obstacle: ignorance of land and its potential.
- Opportunity: to educate the public about what land is and what it can be used for.
- Obstacle: regulatory compliance to set up and manage projects – such as health and safety, insurances, etc.
- Obstacle: lack of community buy-in.
- Opportunity: to carry out community consultation and a local needs analysis.
- Opportunity: for legislative reform such as the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 which provides groups in rural areas with technical assistance and access to grants and loans to develop projects.
- Opportunity: Community Land Buy-outs like in Scotland with its Community Right to Buy provision in rural areas.
- Opportunity: site opportunity locally in an area like Toad's Hole Valley with land that could be used to meet multiple purposes.
- Obstacle: how to measure and show the social, health and economic value of community garden and food projects.
- Opportunity: to develop measures to show social return on investment.
- Opportunity: chance to empower communities to work together.
- Opportunity: to learn from mistakes such as the New Deal for Communities project locally five years ago. A community green space and garden was funded and set up, then leased to a local community group to manage. Project though broke down when the revenue funding from NDC ended and the project worker was made redundant. The land was left to the social landlord to maintain.
- Opportunity: to create viable social enterprises.
- Obstacle: land locally and on the South Downs is not the best for food growing; better for livestock and grazing.
- Opportunity: for a community organisation to take on the Brighton and Hove sheep grazing project and to develop as a city farm under a lease.
- Opportunity: for the CLB to support self-help and guerrilla gardening through meanwhile leasing.
- Opportunity: to shift from a 'selfish mindset' to social action.

- Obstacle: effective social action is blocked by the human resistance to change.
- Opportunity: Church land could perhaps be good for meanwhile usage to prove the potential by using containers for food growing to prove the potential.
- Opportunity: to cut waiting lists for allotments.
- Obstacle: prevailing views – don't assume that 'green living' ideas locally are widespread.
- Opportunity: land sharing to help others.
- Opportunity: to learn from good practice in other EU countries such as Germany where food growing is built into the planning system.
- Opportunity: meanwhile can work even with only nine months to stay on certain sites.
- Obstacle: a CLB would need to be sure that lease terms are clear. Meanwhile leases need to be unambiguous. There is a need to balance housing and green space locally. If lease terms are unclear and there are problems getting leaseholders to quit, this could put off developers in Brighton.
- Opportunity: to secure longer term lease arrangements through food growing in parks and there are opportunities here if small spaces for this are designed well.

Group Three: community groups

The concept of "land poverty" was mentioned, as there are excellent public spaces in B&H, but only for some people - for those who are close to them

People don't know they want a community space until they have experience of it

Demand followed the creating of space – Lewes Road Community Garden (LRCG): just a few individuals that planted a plot, stimulated interest

To start something in neglected space needs an individual with an idea

Space that is public and accessible attracts more interest

Long term dereliction of land is an affront – a dereliction of duty of landowners who have no thoughts of good neighbourliness. Land owners lose the "right" to land through neglect of it.

Local users of land vs. non-local owners of land

Community taking initiative and risk to start a project. But people may not feel empowered or know how to go about creating a space. And what about less visible pieces of land?

Guerrilla gardening cuts out bureaucracy

CLB – conflict in formalising arrangements – risk management for owners and community need

Opportunities for access to land

Harvest: attempting to negate the need for guerrilla gardening, make it mainstream

How? – slowly work on landowners e.g. council

Corporates: CSR policies growing – embed land use within it

Core values of shareholders being part of the corporation

Why not try make good an eyesore? – but do companies care if they are non-resident and this could be a risk for developers when they are applying for planning permission

Demand for land

A lot of demand for people who want to grow food, lack of realism of the work involved

Mix of individuals and those interested in community gardening

e.g. in B&H there is a Friend's of group who want a community garden

Lewes Road project – most value is wider than food growing

Same at Moulsecomb Forest Garden – other stated aims than food growing

Conflicts within community use of land

Food growing vs. other uses? – each piece of land should be identified for its use through consultation

Before bringing the land and community together – consultation with wider community needed. This needs facilitating

Harvest are finding this is taking a long time

Need to give people examples of what the possibilities are

Social outcomes (that might then attract public sector funding) are not guaranteed – therefore funding of projects would be “risk funding”

Operation of a CLB

Bureaucracy of a CLB could put people off

LRCG – it works because it is simple (did not look at H&S, CRBS, inspection, recruitment etc).

Potential of a CLB? if they had gone through a CLB it could have taken longer to get the land, but at the point where they are now it would be useful to have: legal advice; help with negotiating with the land owner; funding

Moulsecomb FG – did not have much opposition to it at the start. Children’s charity, renting out space to groups. Two staff paid by partner organisations, wide variety of funding

Potential of a CLB? could be to pull funding pots together (difficulties in funding core costs)

Fork and Dig It – part of Stanmer Organics. Less accessible, people come across it as there’s no demarcated area where it is in Stanmer Park – communication issues for visitors / users. Two acres, previously used for food growing and this new project took over area and formalised the work. Lease up for renewal next year

Potential of a CLB? Someone to negotiate lease, help the tenants to understand a lease

Harvest: when identified owners of the land have control over how the space is used, it has worked.

Potential of a CLB? Templates for leases? – although each case you need to work through and negotiate lease; case studies useful

One issue for Harvest and their role as a “local CLB” is that of lack of capacity

There should be Food Partnerships across the country to help this sort of work at a local level!
Food growing is unique and complex

Summary of potential role of CLB

- National role to work with national land owners to free up land
- Work has got to be bottom up - needs local knowledge for brokerage role of particular pieces of land – working in partnership with local organisations to do this, and support them
- Facilitation role to bring together bodies involved in the negotiations and in providing support
- Place for people to identify land?
- Identify funding streams for community groups
- Provide case studies to inspire and identify how it has been done
- Role in consultation with neighbours etc
- Legal advice
- Negotiation between groups and land owners

