

set up an Industrial and Provident Society that is actively fundraising so that it may become a viable project delivery vehicle. The body has also attracted a respectable and HCA approved investment partner and developer.

There is a Mayoral commitment to the delivery of a Community Land Trust in London. Boris Johnson made a pledge in his manifesto to deliver at least one CLT in the capital by 2011, while also agreeing to the possible use of the HCA as a vehicle through which this could be achieved. The possibility of transferring the publicly-owned land in Mile End into community ownership offers the opportunity to fulfil this commitment, but in June 2010 the pledge to deliver a CLT was downgraded to an agreement to 'investigate opportunities' for a potential trust.

Despite this lowering of ambition, the trust remains hopeful of taking the site into community ownership and using it for the benefit of local people in an area where housing demand significantly exceeds supply. They also intend to explore opportunities for a CLT on the site of the Olympic Park in Stratford, ensuring there is a legacy of community benefit from the 2012 games.

Community land trusts offer a practical contribution to resolving the affordable housing crisis. They also offer government the opportunity to fulfil electoral promises of decentralisation of power and influence, empowerment of local communities, and increased partnership working. Policy approaches which allow local areas greater influence in their housing markets or encourage public land transfer can help achieve these aims.

The CLTs in Headingley and in Mile End offer workable solutions to problems in their local areas, backed by local communities and supported by a wider community land trust sector that is beginning to mature. The newly-formed National CLT Network will offer practical technical support for trusts as they aim to bring schemes forward and build on the accomplishments of the early adopters. All urban CLTs need now is greater assurance that the reality of the government's 'Big Society' matches the rhetoric.

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[www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk](http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk)

## ST CLEMENT'S URBAN CLT



The London Citizens CLT for the St Clement's Hospital site brings together planners, urban designers and other practitioners and advisors with an approved HCA delivery partner and an enabling developer. The group has prepared a detailed set of plans for the site, and is currently waiting for the HCA tender process to begin.

London Citizens, an alliance of 160 member institutions representing faith institutions, universities and schools, trade unions and community groups, is made up of The East London Communities Organisation (TELCO), South London Citizens and West London Citizens. London Citizens has its roots in the campaign group Citizens UK, which set up social enterprise the UK Centre for Civil Society, which in turn runs the College of Community Organising (CoCO).

CoCO offers training opportunities for those who wish to take part in community organising. One of CoCO's first clients was David Miliband MP, who was advised on how to build a 'Movement for Change' within the Labour Party. At the completion of the contract, the Movement for Change had trained over a thousand local leaders in basic community organising skills, and has been hailed by Ed Miliband as an important legacy from the Labour leadership contest.

The London Citizens CLT has formed a registered community land trust with 18 trustees, evenly split between potential residents, local community representatives from

schools, churches, mosques, Queen Mary University and professional practitioners. Although community land trusts are mature delivery vehicles in rural contexts, there have been specific challenges inherent in forming an urban community land trust. The main issue has been defining the community, especially somewhere as diverse as east London,' says Dave Smith, Community Organiser for London Citizens. 'Our solution is to work through a really wide range of local social institutions and organisations, all of whom are represented via the trustees.'

The community has already invested considerable work in exploring the area and preparing the plans, and has responded extremely positively to the demands of the development process. 'I hope that, when the bid assessment process is underway, the huge amount of value that we've already brought to understanding the potential of this site is appreciated,' says Smith. 'It's been a long struggle for political recognition and support, and through building up a great team that combines planners sitting side-by-side with potential residents in our board meetings, it is a fight we know we can win.' Community-based schemes like this, says Smith, can help to prevent urban drift and gentrification, and provide an in-built subsidy that will grow rather than diminish over time. But above all else, they will stand as a lasting legacy to what organised communities can achieve.

Smith hopes that the recognition that this scheme is attracting will make others take note. We've had visits from local councilors, then the leader of Tower Hamlets Borough Council, and then the mayor of London at our people's assemblies, says Smith. And before the recent general election, the three leaders of our main political parties accepted an invitation to the trust's public assembly, at which 2,500 people put the case to them for community land trust homeownership, live on national television.'

Smith also hopes that more funds will be available for communities in future, instead of 'going instead to someone who proposes to write a glossy report about national housing policy and the "sad sights" to be found within parts of town they have only ever visited on Wikipedia'. And with Big Society promises just around the corner, maybe this time he'll be in luck.