

## Statement to WECA scrutiny and oversight committee – 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022

Statement from Maddy Longhurst on behalf of Tiny House Community Bristol, with support from Sorrel Housing Coop and Furze Housing Coop (see end)

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Tiny House Community Bristol (THCB) is part of the thriving community-led housing sector in the West of England.

We'd like to offer some clear ways in which WECA can support its continued growth, and are asking this committee to lend its support.

A 10 year strategy for Community Led Housing (CLH) is being collaboratively written with key housing stakeholders and housing innovators, led by Bristol Community Land Trust. We think WECA should be part of shaping this strategy alongside others and to play a key role in bringing the vision to life. Can you help ensure WECA plays its part?

Community-led housing worldwide is generating inclusive, regenerative models of housing, changing the daily lived experience of people and entire neighbourhoods. It enables people to create, deliver and manage their own housing solutions together in the ever growing gaps where market and state do not, can not or will not provide.

When Steve Dale, CEO of Bristol Community Land Trust met with Dan Norris prior to his election, Dan saw the potential for CLH to help meet WECA's goals, and laid down this challenge: we as a sector would need to be able to work at pace and scale. We are ready to meet that challenge and would welcome the opportunity to plan a joint approach with Mr Norris and his team. Numerous invitations to further this conversation have been met with no response as yet including most recently an invitation to a meeting in June to discuss the national CLH picture where other mayors will be present. Mr Norris has so far declined. A recent email to Mr Norris was sent from my THCB co-director Rachel Butler, asking about WECA's support and funding for Community Led Housing. Mr Norris replied that there is no funding for CLH.

CLH is an approach that involves **local people taking an active part in the planning, development, ownership or management of land and homes** – often through a community land trust or a cooperative. Typically, this results in **genuinely and permanently affordable homes, of a high environmental specification, on sites which are unavailable or unattractive to mainstream developers or housing associations**. This generates diverse and sustained social, environmental and economic benefits to a degree unseen elsewhere in the housing sector. We think WECA should actively support this. We understand that there is not currently a WECA funding pot reserved for community led housing, but there is money for housing. We invite Mr Norris to think creatively about how we use existing resources and how we work together to attract further investment. We have a one-off opportunity to keep the momentum going. Let's not waste it.

Community Led Housing improves skills, builds social cohesion and trust, increases community resilience, addresses structural inequalities and keeps resources circulating in the local community and local economy. Every £1 invested in community led housing yields a £3 return on investment in terms of improved health and wellbeing. The more we do it, the better we will get at it, the more needs we will meet and the quicker we will build the vital social and economic frameworks that hold communities together.

The West of England is now a national leader in CLH. This is thanks, in large part, to central government funding which has led to the creation of **Community Led Homes West**, the CLH enabling hub for the West of England and a range of supportive policies and practices in local government. The CLH West service is hosted by Bristol Community Land Trust and works with public and private landowners to make land available for housing. It provides the technical support those communities need to be able to obtain land and to secure the finance to develop it.

Today there are over 20 live CLH projects in the West of England, which represents a pipeline of around **400 homes**. These include initiatives in Clevedon, Churchill, Corston, Marshfield, Pill and in Bristol: Hillfields, Knowle West, Lawrence Weston, Lockleaze, Sea Mills, and Southmead to name but a few.

But the pump-priming funding for the sector ends in June 2022 - this pipeline is at risk. We need all stakeholders to work together to ensure the continued success of CLH West and the wider CLH sector.

With WECA tasked with improving the pace and quality of housing delivery we believe it should offer support now.

We'd like the committee to encourage Metro Mayor Dan Norris to meet representatives of our sector and visit CLH projects. We think it fits his role to attract that investment, to provide political leadership on this issue and empower his officers to proactively support our sector. With an acute shortage of affordable housing across the West of England, and too much poor quality new housing not fit for the future still being given planning permission, we need a counterweight: communities are ready to organise to create their own housing solutions, fit for the future, and WECA is part of the solution.

**We would like Dan Norris and his team to do the following:**

- Meet with representatives of our sector to learn about how Community Led Housing (CLH) can support the objectives of WECA
- Help to identify and secure £100,000 per annum to amplify and sustain the impact of the CLH West Hub, and work with them to attract investment into a £1.7 million revolving fund for community led housing
- Explore how existing resources (such as the WECA Investment Fund) could make funding available to support the growth of our sector

- Explore how WECA could help to make land available for community led housing initiatives (e.g. through the Joint Assets Board)
- Broker partnerships with Registered Providers and private developers
- Establish a task and finish group (like that which was established for Modern Methods of Construction - MMC) to look at how we can establish the West of England as a Regional Centre of Excellence in Community Led Housing
- Include an ambitious sub-target for community led housing delivery in the Spatial Development Strategy - to be collectively agreed
- Support the efforts of Bristol Community Land Trust, the CLH West hub and Community Led Housing groups across the four authorities, to lobby central government for a renewal/expansion of the Community Housing Fund

**Please support this proposal.**

Thank you.

Tiny House Community Bristol (THCB)

Tiny House Community Bristol has been supported by CLH West and Bristol's pioneering CLH Land Disposal Policy to bring forward the UK's first tiny house regenerative settlement. This will provide 12-15 genuinely and permanently affordable homes and a range of shared facilities. It will be a zero car, zero waste development where energy will be generated, nutritious food grown, resources shared and water saved. We will be housing people from the housing register and those whose needs are not met by the out-of-control housing system.

We are indebted to the work of CLH West and the CLH enablers who have supported us throughout. It would not happen without them. All groups like ours need support, guidance, until such a time as Community Led Housing is mainstream. We are innovating left right and centre, together, and bringing joy, security and empowerment in the process. [www.tinyhousecommunitybristol.org](http://www.tinyhousecommunitybristol.org)

Sorrel Housing Co-operative, Bristol

As a member of a fledgling CLH group in Bristol (Sorrel Housing Co-operative), we have benefited greatly from the knowledge and support provided from CLH West. We are currently in the process of acquiring land through Bristol City Council's Land Disposal Policy to custom-build long-term affordable, secure and sustainable homes. If successful, we will be housing those for whom the private rented sector is failing. We are indebted to the work of CLH West and their advisors, without whom we would not have made it this far and without whose continued support we will struggle to realise our goals: building homes and communities that are resilient, joyful and empowered. <https://sorrelhousingcoop.wordpress.com/>

## Furze Housing Co-operative

Furze Housing Co-operative is one of the preferred bidders on a site in Lockleaze, and are planning to build 4 or 5 custom built shared houses where there are currently derelict garages which are an eyesore and fly-tipping site. Our project aims to bring together families and single people across generations to tackle loneliness and isolation, in a diverse and supportive community to improve mental well-being. We will build to a high level of environmental performance, with a near zero carbon design, and make best use of the cycle path adjacent to the site to minimise members' car use.

Community Led Housing is an opportunity for innovation in creating long term affordable and sustainable homes. Co-operative housing has a long history of creating affordable, secure and democratic housing, Furze is progressing this model with innovations in the here and now. <https://furzecoop.org/>