

LEISTON COMMUNITY LAND TRUST CHAIR'S REPORT FOR AGM 2020 / 2021

I must begin by expressing my thanks to Sammy Betson, our previous Chair, as it has made my job easier in following the path laid out by the significant work she had done to support the CLT.

As we all know, COVID restrictions have made this a most unusual year for many reasons. Before I go any further I want to express my person sympathies to all those who have been impacted by the pandemic. To keep our projects moving we have continued to meet via video call and work from home as much as technology allows.

Our focus has continued to be implementation of the urban plan concept that local architect and Trustee Simon Merrett has visualised in concept sketches. We explained previously that we have three areas of initial focus split into individual projects.

The first is the development of the garden at the south of the United Church into a publicly accessible space linking the High Street to the Co-op and Sizewell Road. This space will offer a sensory garden, a small event space and clean and a safe pedestrian access route. Our challenge has been around raising sufficient funds to engage our contractor Roger Gladwell Landscaping. I'm pleased to report we have met our funding target. This has been achieved by the dedicated work of our Trustee Phil Edwards and his resolve in tracking down a variety of donations. We thank all the funders for their grant offers but must also recognise the key part that Leiston Town Council has played in this. LTC very kindly stepped in and made a substantial grant, helping us to close our funding gap and allowing us to instruct our landscaping contractor to commence works. The other value of the LTC grant is that it unlocked access to an additional grant that can be used to provide enhanced street furniture features.

We are currently engaging with the Co-op around Health and Safety arrangements for access to their car park to remove the wall and bring in materials. Once all these formalities are completed we will be able to confirm our proposed start date – which we hope will be late August or early September.

The second development is the proposal to regenerate the East Suffolk Council owned land between Sizewell Road and their car park in the High Street. These plans, based on the Leiston Neighbourhood Plan 2017 centre on a market square where a combination of civic services, retail units and affordable housing would be constructed. We have drafted a Business Plan that has had the support of East Suffolk Council, encouraging us to engage with experienced architects Modece to garner their experience on a similar project in Southwold. Having done the outline planning and investigatory work, we now anticipate this work picking up a pace. This has been further endorsed by ESC kindly confirming their continued support to the Project Manager resources allocated to the CLT.

The third development focused on re-use of the Town Council office in Old Post Office Square is contingent upon completion of the market square

proposals and is some way off. However, this has not prevented us from exploring more of the opportunities and challenges this scope of work will present. I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in the work of the CLT and their support in moving things forward. I'm concerned about thanking anyone in particular for fear of leaving others feeling unmentioned, however I want to express my personal thanks to all the Trustees for their involvement and engagement in the activities of our projects. I also know that all the Trustees want to acknowledge the terrific work that the Leiston Crafters have done to raise the profile and wellbeing of Leiston with their Yarnbombing. It is great to see Leiston full of creative colour and we are delighted with their suggestion of having CLT fundraising boxes at key locations.

As a closing remark and on the point of fundraising I would just like to mention that we now have an Easyfundraising web site link that allows you to raise funding when you go online shopping. We know this may sound counter intuitive to our plans to regenerate the town retail offering, however there are many online services that would raise funding without impacting on the CLT such as switching utilities provider or purchasing insurances etc. We do hope you will look at our Facebook page for details of the funding link.

Russ Rainger
Chair, Leiston Community Land Trust
July 2021