

Leiston Community Land Trust

2026 Chair's report to AGM

Having led the Community Land Trust since its inception, Russ Rainger decided earlier this year to stand down as Chair and I was elected by the Board to chair the Trust until the AGM. Russ remains a trustee and as those who know him would expect, is very active in CLT affairs.

I bring experience of having worked with CLTs elsewhere, so I know how they can play a pivotal role in enabling effective regeneration and the creation of additional new social housing, which is something people tell us is much needed in the town. My priorities over the past few months have been to:

- Recruit some new trustees with relevant skills and experience
- Strengthen our relationship with both the Town Council and East Suffolk Council
- Push for the development of Market Square to include affordable social housing
- Explore other opportunities for social housing in the town
- Explore the opportunity to acquire the United Reformed Church and adapting into flexible community and performance space, while allowing Sunday worship to continue
- Explore a community art project that can brighten up the town centre

Chairing a community land trust, which is unpaid, can consume endless time and be hugely frustrating. Leiston is a town facing change. Some will be positive, and some inevitably disruptive. As chair of the trust my role is to remain positive, upbeat and see opportunity where others see threats. Progress can be slow and difficult to see, but I am confident that Leiston in 2035 will be a nicer place to live, work and shop than it is today.

Robert Ashton