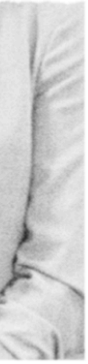
CENTRE for DEMOCRATIC BUSINESS

Blagrave. investing in young people



Community Wealth Building Exploration

Final report produced for the Blagrave Trust

By Jonny Gordon-Farleigh

March 2025

Cover Letter

Dear staff and trustees,

Over the six months we've been on a learning journey to explore both the principles and practices of Community Wealth Building as they apply to community assets across our local economies, and to understand your own role within this economic and social movement as a charitable trust committed to supporting young people facing injustice.

Your participation in this process represents a significant investment into developing an intimate knowledge of the opportunities and challenges of managing physical assets in a hostile economic and political environment. It's also rare that a whole organisational approach is taken that involves both trustees and staff, and it's clearly benefited from the experience and expertise of everyone on the team.

It's been a really positive experience to witness the increasing confidence across the team as abstract principles become more familiar in local practices in neighbourhoods. And it feels like we have achieved the main purpose of this process, which was to be informed by the expertise and lived experience of community asset leaders who are patiently working to bring assets into local ownership in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

I hope that you now feel confident enough to move forward with your organisational strategy and see your future investments into assets in alignment with the Trust's core mission to support young people to have more agency and control over their local environment. With the learning captured in this report and the team, I think the Trust is uniquely positioned to take up an influential role in advocating for this approach across the rest of the UK's foundation and trust sector. But beyond your own sector, you also clearly have another role in shifting practice in the field of community assets that has failed to put young people at the heart of this new infrastructure in our communities.

I'm keen to keep supporting the team as an advisor as you move into the implementation phase, excited about what the future holds as you begin to announce new acquisitions and investment partnerships, and encourage you to hold your ambitions as you start to make decisions.

All the best,
Jonny Gordon-Farleigh,
March 2025

Contents

1. Introduction

"As Blagrave's assets reduce in size, the public benefit of physical assets grow."

In December 2023, Eli Manderson-Evans, CEO of the Trust, brought together the Trustees to share his vision for the Trust 'Leading with hope'. This vision was based upon his key priorities coming to Blagrave which formed part of the mandate for this work. However, most importantly this vision was developed out of what Blagrave already did to a large part, using a strengths-based approach to the Trust's work. As such the process was reframed as 'Strategy Consolidation' to reflect this important fact.

Following the initial sharing session, 1-1 meetings to invite feedback and tweak the vision, the board came together in Brighton for the 2024 Trustee away day where they signed off this new vision for the Trust so that the required learning work could begin. The trustees committed to the following summary line:

> **The Blagrave Trust has committed to developing a new relationship with our assets with a focus on physical sites that serve to strengthen and sustain change led by and with young people. We are keen to explore the approach of community wealth building as a means to strengthen, deepen and transform the way we invest in young people.**

The Trust also committed to the below. We will:

- Continue to innovate by rooting Blagrave's work in places and investing in spaces for young people
- Use our grantmaking resources more strategically by working with a more focused geographic remit
- Be intentional about using ALL of our resources in support of Mission
- Use a community wealth building approach, which is an alternative approach to investment and a way of supporting the emergence of an alternative economic system which aligns with Blagrave's mission

- Work in collaboration with other funders who are interested in this approach.
- Work in locations where there is a receptive local civil society and local government
- Develop a strategy that is hopeful, bold and transformational
- Work with a group of experts to further support our thinking and development of plans.

As such, in the summer of 2024 a core group of Trustees, who formed the core working group around this new strategy, embarked on a tendering process to collaborate with a learning partner to support them to explore community wealth building as a lens through which to develop a new direction of travel for the Trust. Following a rigorous interviewing process the Trust landed on a learning partner for this exciting journey – Stir to Action & Centre for Democratic Business.

Kicking off in September, they set out hosting a learning journey for staff and trustees to develop their understanding of the options for asset-led development, taking inspiration from around the UK and beyond.

Eli Manderson-Evans

2. Recommendations

I. Define Core Role and Strategic Direction

Clearly define Blagrave Trust's primary role as an investor and/or developer of assets, which may look different in each location. This will help ensure alignment of goals, partnerships, and resources moving forward.

Action	Hold a strategic planning session to decide on the role the Trust will play in each location.

Explore the possibility of Blagrave Trust becoming an 'ethical landlord,' with legal and maintenance responsibilities for the acquired properties.

Action	Develop a model for asset management that outlines responsibilities and opportunities for transferring ownership to local organisations over time.

II. Pathway to Ownership and Governance Structure

Establish clear criteria and milestones for transferring ownership of assets to local organisations (i.e., the 'pathway to ownership').

Action	Create a clear framework for asset transfer that includes specific performance or operational milestones.

Consider using covenants – or similar mechanisms – to ensure the long-term community use of the assets.

Action	Investigate options for drafting covenants that align with the Trust's values and goals for community development.

III. Operational and Development Models

Assess whether the current CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) can take on the role of asset developer, or if a special purpose vehicle (SPV) is needed.

Action	Evaluate the current capacity of the CIO and explore the creation of an SPV if necessary.

Ensure the SPV (if created) has governance structures that reflect the Trust's mission and incorporate community perspectives.

Action	Develop governance frameworks for the SPV, with a focus on inclusivity and local expertise.

Recruit specialists, either as employees or freelancers, to support the asset development process, as it will require a broad range of consultants, such as property solicitors, chartered surveyors, environmental and planning consultants, and architects and structural engineers.

Action	Identify key roles and expertise gaps in the Trust's team to effectively support the project's development, and alongside such professional support, ensure you continue to build relationships with the community asset leaders you've engaged in this process so far.

IV. Youth-Centric Focus

Maximise the involvement of young people throughout the asset development process, ensuring their input is central to the design and operation of new community spaces. It's also important to ensure that there is a realistic commitment from the Trust to support this process.

Action	Create advisory groups, workshops, and co-design opportunities for young people.
Develop governance mechanisms that center young people's voices and leadership in the decision-making process.	
Action	Explore models for youth-led governance or youth representation on decision-making boards related to asset development.
Our unique role to shift practice in the democratic ownership space to enable young people to be at the heart – that is our USP – and how this role can translate to wider infra in this space (mention to what infra is needed e.g. succession planning – how are yp being supported to see this space as strategic and deeply important – coops	
Action	ala communication, conferences, etc

V. Impact Measurement and Social Value	
Develop a comprehensive framework to measure the social and economic impact of the assets on young people, both during development and after completion. Beyond using formal metric tools, take advantage of the Trust's storytelling approach.	
Action	Establish indicators for impact measurement (e.g., youth employment, educational opportunities, community engagement).
Integrate social value assessments into the decision-making and investment process to ensure the long-term sustainability of assets.	
Action	Adopt a social impact measurement tool to track the ongoing benefits of community assets.

VI. Broader Investment Approach and Financial Instruments	
Consider a dual approach of grants and repayable finance to balance investment risk and ensure financial sustainability.	
Action	Create flexible financing models, including community shares or no-interest loans, that align with the Trust's mission and financial goals.
Explore opportunities to be an 'institutional investor,' contributing equity or grants into active and emerging community enterprises.	
Action	Develop an investment policy that details how Blagrave Trust can use its financial assets to support community-driven development. For example, how you might co-invest in a large scheme whilst retaining your identity as a youth funder, in a way that ringfences your grant or investment for the benefit of local young people. This approach also provides a learning opportunity to guide your other investments.

VII. Community Wealth Building and Hub Creation	
Position initial investment projects as anchor institutions that can catalyse further community wealth-building efforts.	
Action	Identify priority areas for anchor investments, focusing on economic activities that can be sustained by the community.
Consider a 'hub' model that aggregates services, resources, and opportunities around newly developed spaces.	
Action	Investigate the potential for developing multi-purpose community hubs that offer educational, social, and economic opportunities for young people.

VIII. Collaborative Development and Sector Engagement	
Ensure that the investment strategy takes advantage of match/joint funding opportunities, in alignment with the Trust's core value of collaboration - seeing this as an opportunity to position young people at the heart of other foundations' CWB efforts, for example.	
Action	Build partnerships with regional and national funders and networks to align efforts and leverage additional funding. For example, become a joint investor in a London-based property that is co-owned with at least one other foundation.
Continue to engage the experience and expertise used during the process, so it's available to your decision making process over the next few years.	
Action	Formalise a group of community asset leaders, solicitors, and property experts to advise the Trust.
Ensure transparency in the site selection and development process to build trust and accountability within the community.	
Action	Develop a public-facing process for selecting asset development sites and share progress updates with stakeholders.

IX. Capacity Building and Procurement Policies	
Identify gaps in the Trust's team and recruit additional expertise as necessary, particularly in asset development, project management, and social impact evaluation.	
Action	Conduct a skills audit within the Trust to pinpoint areas for capacity-building.

Implement a procurement policy that aligns with environmental and social goals, prioritising local suppliers and sustainable practices.	
Action	Develop a procurement strategy that focuses on sustainability, equity, and local sourcing for projects (i.e. retrofitting/refurbishment).

X. Communication and Sector Influence	
Given the potential concerns around the shift in the Trust's strategy, and poor practice in the redistribution process by other UK Trusts, it's important to develop a strong communication strategy to effectively share the Trust's progress, impact, and learnings with the sector and the wider public.	
Action	Establish regular reporting and updates for stakeholders, using social communications and events, such as a national conference.

3. Economic Context

Over the last decade, many of our cities and towns have changed beyond recognition, with both the inexorable rise of private capital coming into urban regeneration, and the withdrawal of state funding from publicly owned assets and services. Despite the negative mood about the economy, in some ways it's quite easy to underestimate the scale and intensification of private ownership of our foundational economy. But we can see this everyday in the built environment, especially in the closure or change in use of local assets, from youth and community centres, libraries, and sports fields, to the rise of luxury residential developments and corporate 'third spaces'.

In terms of the UK's public sector, recent analysis from the Institute for Public Policy Research's 2023 report – *Parallel lives: Regionally rebalancing wealth, power and opportunity* – claims that "an estimated 75,000 council assets, worth around £15 billion, have been sold since 2010." It goes on to say that "on average, more than 6,000 council assets worth around £1.2 billion annually have been sold every year during the last 13 years."

The most important – and probably most depressing – aspect of this of analysis it that only just over 3% of those assets have gone into community ownership, meaning the remaining 97% have been sold into private ownership. But this mass sell-off of public assets that started at the beginning of the Clegg-Cameron coalition government is not the end of austerity, with a 2024 survey by the Local Government Association (LGA) revealing that nearly one in five council leaders anticipate declaring de facto bankruptcy within the next year due to insufficient government funding. Similarly, research by Grant Thornton UK LLP indicates that over 20% of English councils risk financial failure within the next 12 months without additional income or spending cuts, with this figure rising to 40% over the next five years. It's important to note that these assets are not being replaced by councils, and the loss of these physical assets is likely to be irreversible.

In terms of the private sector, analysis from Common Wealth's 2025 report – *Open for Business or Up for Sale?* – shows that "as of the first quarter of 2024, the UK is the largest market in absolute terms for overseas investment in real estate, ahead even of much larger countries like the US and China. In relative terms, the UK is tied joint first, with Belgium and Ireland, for the largest market for overseas investment in real estate."

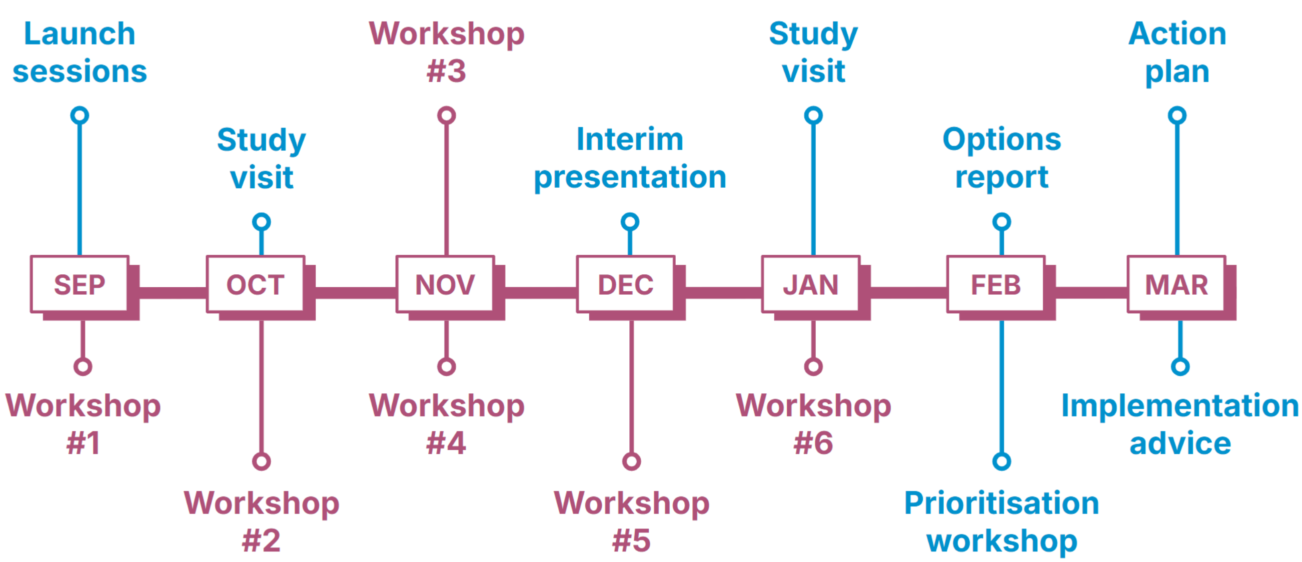
This surge in foreign investment is particularly evident in the Build-to-Rent (BTR) sector, "which now accounts for approximately 20% of new housing developments in the UK and nearly 30% in London." The report continues to argue that these institutional investors will exacerbate the housing crisis, particularly affecting young people.

The private sector has also been a significant actor in property speculation, particularly through 'land banking'. This is a practice where investors purchase and hold land as a long-term investment, rather than developing it immediately. Investors will often acquire land with the expectation that its value will increase over time due to factors like urban expansion, infrastructure development, or zoning changes.

This particular practice may in part be responsible for the high levels of commercial property vacancy, with 2023 data indicating there were in the region of 170,000 empty commercial properties, with one in seven high streets shops standing empty. In terms of workspace, it is also estimated that the amount of vacant office space across the UK stood at 102 million sq ft in 2024, the highest level since 2014 and 65% above pre-pandemic levels.

From every perspective, access to and ownership of physical assets has changed dramatically over the last few decades, with an increase in privatisation, vacancy, and acquisition cost. Despite this challenging context, community-led organisations – and supportive partners in charitable foundations and local government – are using and developing new models to 'decommodify' assets that are vital to social and economic life in neighbourhoods across the UK.

4. Timeline



The learning journey timeline was designed to incorporate a blend of interactive workshops, immersive study visits, personalised one-on-one calls with trustees, and regular check-ins with the entire team.

All of the sessions included expert witness and reflection opportunities for the team to develop their understanding, and to see where the learning might inform the Trust’s approach.

5. Experts

Over the course of the Learning Journey, we've engaged a diverse range of community asset leaders and specialist support organisations.

Civic Square

Hastings Commons

Stretford Public Hall

Coin Street

Architectural Heritage Fund

Doughnut Economics Lab

Ubele Initiative

Stokes Croft CLT

Bristol Community Energy

Empire Fighting Chance

Lankelly Chase

Kitty's Laundrette

MAIA Space

Nudge Community Builders

Unit 38

Platform Places

Don't Settle

See full resource list of expert materials in the Appendix.

6. Launch session

In early September we hosted launch sessions with staff and trustees focused on introducing the concept and practice of 'community wealth building', as well as engaging the team's experience around the question of 'How did physical space and social infrastructure play a positive role in your transition to adulthood?'

This section features an outline of the 'principles' of community wealth building and a series of case studies of it put into practice.

What are the 'principles' of Community Wealth Building?

Plural ownership of the economy

Locally owned and socially minded enterprises are more likely to employ, buy, and invest locally. For this reason, community wealth building seeks to promote locally owned and socially minded enterprises by promoting various models of enterprise ownership that enable wealth created by users, workers and local communities to be retained by them.

Making financial power work for local places

Rather than attempting to attract national or international capital, community wealth building seeks to increase flows of investment within local economies, by harnessing the wealth that exists locally. These can include local pension funds, mutuals and community banks, credit unions, community shares, community bonds, and local lenders (like Kindred or Ujima Fund)

Fair employment

Anchor institutions and local businesses can stimulate the local economy through progressive employment and local labour market activities which has proven to be a powerful tool to improve employment opportunities and workers rights by using the The Real Living Wage, the only wage rate based on what people need to live, and the Good Employment Charter, which is a voluntary scheme to create equal access to quality work that is inclusive, fairly compensated, offers security and flexibility, and cultivates an environment where health and wellbeing thrives.

Progressive procurement

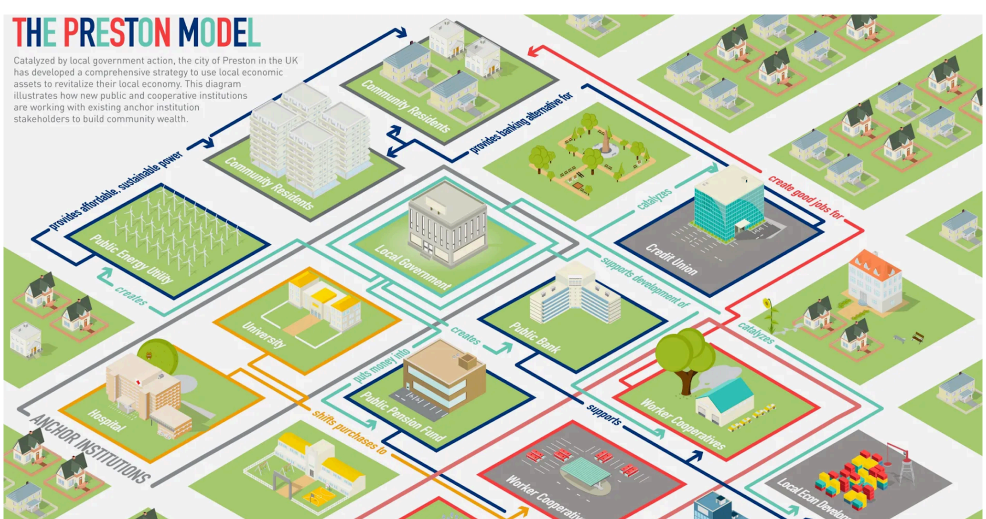
Through the progressive procurement of goods and services, an institution's spending power can be a means through which greater economic, social and environmental benefits can be achieved. By adapting their procurement processes and decision making, anchor institutions can create dense local supply chains and ecosystems of businesses that are more likely to support local employment and have a greater tendency to recirculate wealth and surplus locally.

Socially productive use of land and property

Assets should be owned and managed in ways which ensure that they generate wealth for local citizens. To achieve this, public land owners should develop governance and management structures where communities can take direct control of common assets, for example through transferring under-utilised assets to democratic societies and Community Land Trusts, or working through Public-Commons Partnerships, which is a joint enterprise that incorporates 'local associations', public statutory bodies, and wider stakeholders in the ownership and governance of assets, ranging from coastal aquaculture and country farms to urban high streets.

Illustration: Community Wealth Building in practice

The below illustration by Democracy Collaborative shows the connections between different parts of a local economic ecosystem, such as public procurement, public energy utilities, worker co-operatives, local economic development, and community banks.



7. Case Studies

This section features a series of case studies that represent the principles of community wealth building in action.

Case Study One: Projekts MCR Skatepark

ProjektsMCR is a skatepark in the centre of Manchester, built in an area of disused land under the Mancunian Way flyover. As well as open sessions, they offer coaching for children and adults, and run an independent café and a skate shop.

A small community group established the park in 2004 in response to Manchester City Council's ban on skateboarding in public spaces. Later, with grant funding from Youth Capital Fund and Sport England among others to develop the facilities, the space gradually expanded to be one of the largest skateparks in the UK. Then, in 2018, they launched a Community Share Offer (CSO) to bring ProjektsMCR into community ownership.

Governance model

- It is a not-for-profit Community Benefit Society, meaning individuals can become members of the organisation. The members own the Society and can vote on Directorship posts.

- ProjektsMCR has 8 Directors on its Board, and 74 members can vote at the AGM. You can join for as little as £20.
- As a not-for-profit organisation, profits are reinvested into the organisation rather distributed among shareholders.

Financial model

- ProjektsMCR raised £134K through their CSO 2018, with 50% matched from the Community Shares Booster Programme
- In addition to the CSO, Projekts raised around £700K from charitable trusts and funding bodies, as well as £150K from social investment loans.
- ProjektsMCR is funded predominantly through trading, with income from skate park entrance fees, café sales, school skateboarding classes, and facility hire.

Community Impact

- Weekly sessions in schools across Greater Manchester to introduce more children to skateboarding
- Subsidised entry fees for children whose parents are on universal credit
- Women-and-girl-only sessions and queer nights, increasing access to a traditionally male-dominated environment.

Case Study Two: Kitty's Laundrette

Kitty's Launderette is a community launderette and social hub based in Anfield, North Liverpool, the third most deprived of the 317 local authorities in England. It offers affordable (or free) laundry services in a warm and welcoming space, alongside a programme of arts and social activities.

Kitty's Launderette operates as a worker community co-operative – a hybrid of a multi-stakeholder and worker co-operative. This democratic governance structure gives the worker-members a greater level of autonomy, encourages collaboration between members and users of the launderette, and ensures that the organisation maintains a strong level of accountability to the wider community.

Governance model

- It is a worker-community owned business, incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee

Financial model

- 50% business to customer trade
- 20% business to business trade
- 25% revenue support grants
- 5% project grants

Community impact

- Tackling hygiene poverty and fuel poverty
- Community building and combating social isolation
- Local, high-quality job creation – 50% of employees have experience of long-term unemployment

Case Study Three: Kindred

Kindred is an independent platform – owned and led by 'Socially Trading Organisations' – to provide interest-free loans and support to businesses in the Liverpool City Region. It was initially created through a public-charitable partnership by foundation & city government (£6.5m), but is now governed by the businesses in the network.

- Non-extractive and generative finance for 'socially-trading' businesses
- Capital is recycled by members back into lending pool
- Interest-free loans which create a 'double dividend'

Case Study Four: Leeds Action for Community Homes (LATCH)

LATCH was founded in 1989 by a group of students. Initially set up as a co-operative to provide housing for its members, it shifted its model to begin providing housing for those in need. Today, LATCH is a member-led Community Benefit Society whose mission is to bring long-term empty properties back into use, refurbishing derelict and run-down houses in the Chapeltown, Harehills, and Burley areas of Leeds. In the last three decades it has acquired 110 houses, typically taking on four to six new properties each year, all of which have long waiting lists in a metropolitan area where 7,000 individuals have priority homeless status.

As an ethical landlord, LATCH's 22 members of staff provide property maintenance, as well as providing other forms of support to tenants, many of whom have complex needs, such as a history of mental ill-health, or having left an abusive relationship. As LATCH expands, they are beginning to offer houses to those with specific support needs. Their model is to move from LATCH housing to independent living after about two to three years.

Governance model

- 400 members, which include core members, such as
- Tenants
- Staff
- And then supporters, which include directors, investors, and trainees.

Financial model

- Rental income from existing properties – now 110 properties
- Community shares – since 2021 they have run two share offers on Ethex, raising £1,125m from 315 investors, with each successful campaign inviting prospective shareholders to invest from a £500 minimum, with the first campaign in 2021 offering a 4% forecast return, and the second in 2023 a 5% forecast return.

Community impact

- Creating safe and reliable housing for those in housing need
- The refurbishment process provides work experience opportunities for eight to ten trainees, many of whom come from challenging backgrounds, to develop construction and employability skills.
- Housing and support needs offered to tenants from staff

Case Study Five: Strontian hydro and school

This journey began in 2015 with a community hydro scheme just outside the village. The community group purchased a disused dam from Scottish Water, under Community Right to Buy legislation and raised £750K in community shares to finance the hydro scheme – a 100kW hydroelectric turbine

The scheme generates approximately 423,300kWh a year, enough for about 132 homes, and sells back to the grid – earning in the region of £15,000 for local community benefit.

Out of this community energy project, the group also decided to build a new school after rejecting the council's refurbishment proposal.

Governance model

- Community Benefit Society
- 80 members
- Board of seven elected directors

Financial model

- £900,000 for the new school has been met through a community share issue, commercial loan from Triodos, Scottish land fund grant and a grant from the related Sunart renewable energy project
- Rent from council

Community impact

- Lease the school to the council (for as long as they need it as a school) and use the money for community benefit
- Should it no longer be needed as a school in the future, the building has been designed in such a way it can be converted into affordable homes in the future.

8. Workshops and Study Visits

Workshop #1: Community Wealth Building Storyboard

For our first workshop, we curated a Community Wealth Building 'storyboard' to hear the stories of community asset leaders from across the UK. They shared the transformative power of physical assets in social change and economic regeneration, and we found out why these initiatives started, who's involved, how they were funded, and what partnerships enabled them to be successful.

We were also joined by some speakers from support bodies and agencies who are developing programmes, grant support, and advice for communities who are acquiring and developing new assets for local benefit.

Changemakers & Experts

- Hannah Slogget, Nudge Community Builders
- Cait Saunders, Coin Street
- Grace Harrison, Kitty's Laundrette
- Ben Beach, Unit 38
- Bex Trevelyan, Platform Places

Organisations

Nudge Community Builders is a Community Benefit Society set up in 2017 by local people to bring buildings back into use on Plymouth's Union Street, where 25% of the land was standing empty. Hannah is passionate about making lasting change on the street and disrupting systems that hold communities back. She previously worked for Plymouth City Council Planning Department. Her background in community engagement and regeneration has helped Nudge to breathe life and hope into a street that has missed out for too long. Website here.

Coin Street was saved from dereliction by a group of local residents in 1984, and now the 13-acre site has been transformed and sits at the heart of a thriving neighbourhood with co-operative homes, parks and gardens, shops and design studios, galleries, restaurants, a family and children's centre, sports pitches, and a range of community programmes and activities. Coin Street Community Builders, a social enterprise, was set up to make the North Southwark and Waterloo neighbourhood a better place to live, work and play. Website here.

Kitty's Launderette in North Liverpool. Kitty's is a reimagined high street amenity, providing a range of affordable and ecological laundry facilities, as well as an accessible social space for everyone in the diverse local community. Kitty's is a worker-community co-operative, led by 8 local people in Real Living Wage jobs, and supported by a community membership made up of customers, local residents, partners and volunteers. Website here.

Platform Places was created to address one of the biggest barriers to community enterprises starting and sustaining was the lack of access to affordable, secure and long-term property, and that asset owners and councils were struggling to find amazing people and ideas to activate buildings for local benefit. Website here.

Key insights

- Identify local needs and ensure vision is led by local residents and key stakeholders
- Define the ideal trading model – what is a realistic split between the % of commercial income vs grants?
- Use a mixed business model – multi-purpose sites can offer diverse income streams and more resilience

- Find the right scale – it's important to understand the size of the project
- Develop a procurement policy that focuses on sourcing local goods and services where possible
- Explore how community shares can be gifted to young members of the community to enable them part of the membership

Workshop #2: Neighbourhood-led transformation

A visualisation of the plans for Civic Square in Ladywood, Birmingham.

For the second session, we explored Community Wealth Building through the lens of organisations who are not just setting up individual initiatives, but working at the neighbourhood scale to transform their local economy.

Ecosystem development is an approach that focuses on enabling a community-led network of assets and initiatives to provide foundational services, from housing to energy, and employment to wellbeing.

We found out why certain organisations are taking this systems-level approach, how it increases collective impact, and builds-in resilience across local initiatives.

Changemakers & Experts

- Immy Kaur, Civic Square
- Jess Steele, Hastings Commons
- Gavin Richards, Architectural Heritage Fund
- Rob Shorter, Doughnut Economics

Organisations

Civic Square is demonstrating neighbourhood-scale civic infrastructure for social, ecological, economic and climate transition together with many people and partners in Ladywood, Birmingham UK. Principally they are working to demonstrate how the climate transition and deep retrofit of our homes, streets and neighbourhoods can be designed, owned and governed by the people who live there now in systemic, tangible and participatory ways. **civicsquare.cc**

Hastings Commons is a consortium of organisations that take derelict and difficult buildings around the White Rock area of Hastings into community custody, transforming them into social spaces, homes and workspaces that will always be affordable and open to all. **hastingscommons.com**

Architectural Heritage Fund is a registered charity, working since 1976 to promote the conservation and sustainable reuse of historic buildings for the benefit of communities across the UK, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas. The AHF exists to help communities find enterprising ways to revitalise the old buildings they love. We help them with advice, grants and loans. Our support acts as a catalyst for putting sustainable heritage at the heart of vibrant local economies. For over 40 years, we've been the leading social investor in creating new futures for historic buildings. **ahfund.org.uk**

Doughnut Economics Action Lab is part of the emerging global movement of new economic thinking and doing. Our aim is to help create 21st century economies that are regenerative and distributive by design, so that they can meet the needs of all people within the means of the living planet. We call this Doughnut Economics. **oughnuteconomics.org**

Key insights

- Meanwhile space is there to create more land value and it is mainly captured by the private sector
- A 'development lease' with an 'option to buy' can allow for community engagement and business planning before making a final commitment on purchase
- Ring fencing income from certain 'profit centres' can be used as restricted resources to fund youth services
- Creating a multi-property portfolios is a way of creating financial sustainability, making it easier to access capital, and share governance experience across more than one asset

- Renovation costs are often prohibitively high, so ‘phased, organic development’ offers the opportunity to develop a building “one floor at a time”, and also use local – non-commercial – labour in the process
- Asset-based projects need different types of capital – capital to purchase the freehold, resource capital works (i.e. renovation), and provide revenue funding to support the enterprise as it establishes itself
- There’s a need to explore the potential ‘pathways to ownership’ – what are the steps towards transferring asset ownership to local organisations or wider community? E.g. If BT initially retains ownership of the site, what milestones are there to trigger a “timed exit”?

Workshop #3: Generative business models

For our third workshop, we dived into the innovative business models of several organisations who are managing community-led and multi-purpose spaces, exploring how they've diversified their income streams and reduced their reliance on grants.

We also looked at how these organisations have developed partnerships with local government to deliver public services, increased their trading income by becoming a well-known space for local communities and business, and use grants to deliver some of their services.

Changemakers & Experts

- Simon Borkin, Stretford Public Hall
- Amahra Spence, MAIA
- Phil Tulba, Ubele Initiative & Wolves Lane

Organisations

Stretford Public Hall is a community-owned, multi-purpose building. The hall is run by Friends of Stretford Public Hall, who have owned the building since a community asset transfer in 2015. We are a charitable Community Benefit Society which is a type of co-operative, and is co-owned by more than 800 members. They provide accessible community space and deliver our own programme of events and activities, including arts activities, live music nights, community cinema, and health and wellbeing activities. **stretfordpublichall.org.uk**

MAIA is an arts and social justice organisation based in the West Midlands, UK, that is committed to the transformative power of Black imagination. They've also supported YARD (2020), turning a residential townhouse into a neighbourhood site of imagination, artist residency space, and community hub. She is currently working to create ABUELOS, an artist-led hotel and cultural space, grown from the spirit of Grandad's house. **maiagroup.co**

Wolves Lane is a thriving space in North London for sustainable growing, education, social enterprise and community engagement. Ubele, along with OrganicLea, are legal partners and 'stewards' of the 3-acre site contributing to its development. The former plant nursery has commercial glasshouses, a rare palm house with tropical plants, cactus garden, rainforest area, professional standard kitchen, classroom space, barn and woodland area.

The buildings and glasshouses are in need of refurbishment which the consortium has committed to in development stages as well as investment in sustainable energy systems to heat the palm house.
ubele.org/our-work/wolves-lane-centre

Key insights

- Community Shares is a way of creating opportunities for local people to become financial investors and co-owners of local assets
- Explore the potential 'economy of involvement' – co-owner to volunteer to board member – and be sensitive to how certain individuals and groups may be involved in different capacities and at different times
- Look for opportunities for asset transfer from local authority – but ask yourself if the lease length is sufficient to deliver long-term impact and borrow and repay finance
- Commission expert consultancy to support the process – e.g. full building survey, rigorous timelines & budgets, & plan for lots of alternative scenarios
- Research the consultancy fees for the sectors you're planning to commission as part of the process, and understand they may change during the life of the project
- Look at ways of expanding accountability to the wider local community beyond those who are active as members, staff, and volunteers (including having "informal touch points")
- Many of community asset projects are in their infancy, and their commercial income ranges from 10%-60% of their overall turnover (hence need for revenue grant funding in first few years)
- Language and accessibility is vital part of asset-based development, ensuring it is sensitive to different audiences

Study Visit #1: Bristol

Organisations

Stokes Croft Land Trust acquired 17-25 Jamaica Street in May 2022 with the support of 440 investors raising £325,000. The land trust is a vehicle to acquire local property and land in Bristol and transfer it into community ownership, particularly assets that need to be safeguarded from price-hiking property developers to protect the existence of affordable space for local creatives, activists, and artists.

Bristol Energy Co-op started in 2012 and has raised more than £13m to build a local power station on the roofs of buildings in the city. We visited a solar installation on a building managed by Empire Fighting Chance, an award-winning sport development charity, who have transformed thousands of young lives through non-contact boxing.

Kingsley Hall is a heritage building nestled in the heart of Bristol's historic Old Market Conservation Area, and is owned by 1625 Independent People. They are renovating the building into a venue that will eventually offer affordable homes, a cafe, and training and recreational spaces for young people who are homeless, leaving care or at risk of homelessness in Bristol and the South West.

Empire Fighting Change is a leading sport for development charity that was born on Bristol's streets in 2006 to fight the impact of inequality on young people's lives. Their model features a powerful fusion of boxing and psychology, delivered by coaches and therapists that young people can trust, in a place where they feel safe, cared for and understood.

Windmill Hill City Farm Windmill Hill City Farm is a 4.5-acre green space in South Bristol, 20-minutes' walk from Bristol city centre. It offers education, recreation and therapy for local people and is a vital hub for the community. Facilities on site include a café and farm shop, children's nursery, community & kitchen gardens, a range of farm animals, picnic and play areas, indoor and outdoor spaces to hire and a 5-a-side football pitch.

Key insights

- Heritage projects take many years, involve restrictions on construction, and incur higher costs than unlisted properties
- You can set different thresholds for community shares purchases, giving lower entry to local postcodes or specific groups. E.g. Stokes Croft Land Trust set the share price as low as £10 for local residents
- Managing community assets often involves a tension between setting affordable rent levels for tenants, and having sufficient income to cover staff wages and other development costs
- Assess your options for decarbonising the building, from solar to air source heat pumps, but also research the supply chains of renewable energy providers to ensure they are as ethical as possible
- Explore the potential for the use of 'social impact bonds'. This is a contract with the public sector, whereby it pays for better social outcomes in certain areas and passes on part of the savings achieved to investors
- Create opportunities for young people to shadow specialists during the project, such as sessions with architects and other specialist contractors
- Actively develop the skills and experience of young people to become future trustees
- Develop partnerships with local anchor institutions, which may be universities, charities, commercial businesses, and local government
- Test if you can develop a business plan based on 'full cost recovery' – i.e. Income from housing, cafe, and local or corporate hire covers your expenditure
- If you're not prepared to develop housing as part of a project, explore the potential for a relationship with a local Housing Association who can provide the capital and future management
- Green and natural spaces are an important dimension to community assets, particularly in terms of increasing wellbeing
- Though most of the projects were owned by the local community, most of them had leaders or board members who had experience in developing and managing asset projects.

Study Visit #2: Birmingham

This section outlines key observations from a two-day study visit to Birmingham, focusing on the city's urban development, cultural landscape, and community initiatives. The visit provided insights into regeneration projects, transport infrastructure, and economic strategies, with input from local stakeholders. Discussions covered challenges and successes in areas such as housing, sustainability, and public engagement. The following notes capture key takeaways from site visits and meetings, offering a snapshot of Birmingham's evolving urban environment.

Save Birmingham
Kathy Hopkin

Birmingham City Council, the largest local authority in Europe, declared bankruptcy in 2024, which has led to the council selling off public assets to cover funding shortfalls for essential services.

Save Birmingham is a campaign group, supported by Barrow Cadbury, that assists local organisations in bringing public assets into community ownership. A key part of their strategy is encouraging residents to register these assets as 'Assets of Community Value.'

Public facilities such as youth and community centres, libraries, and leisure centres are at risk. Of Birmingham's 15 youth clubs, eight are currently under threat of being sold.

While Save Birmingham has a working relationship with the city council, they are concerned that the process is being managed by the Commercial Property Team rather than a more community-focused body.

Community Asset Transfer legislation allows councils to transfer buildings to community groups, but many of these properties fail to meet regulations on issues such as asbestos removal and energy efficiency.

Save Birmingham is actively supporting local groups with business planning and financing. However, a major challenge is the limited capacity of voluntary organisations to navigate this process.

Maia Space
Amahra Spence

Maia Space is a community development organisation based in Ladywood, Birmingham. Their main asset is Grandad's House, a residential property that aims to foster a domestic and familial culture, and provide space for artists. As an arts-focused organisation, they work closely with local young people.

They are collaborating with property developer Urban Splash to secure a former brownfield site within a larger redevelopment project (which includes Civic Square), with the goal of creating 'permanent infrastructure' and ensuring long-term community ownership.

In relation to Birmingham City Council's asset disposal, Maia Space recently withdrew from a Community Asset Transfer process – partly due to the poor condition of the building and also because a private buyer outcompeted them.

We Don't Settle

We Don't Settle is a charity dedicated to heritage and diverse communities. They support young people in governance roles, emphasising that it typically takes around two years for young individuals to gain confidence in board responsibilities.

Breakfast Session Discussion

- Valeria: Interested in how BT could support capacity building and intervene in Birmingham.
- Callum: Local experts and a strong ecosystem of organisations are key.
- Rochelle: Emphasised the importance of using everyday language and hearing more from young people.
- Hannah: Wants to bridge gaps between organisations and young people. Recognises the challenges faced by small community organisations with limited capacity.
- Eddie: Values seeing these projects in action. Believes partnership building is essential.
- Danny: Suggests a strategic investment in Save Birmingham. Supports collaboration with a private developer like Urban Splash.

- Eli: Found the first session insightful. Shocked by the poor asset transfer process. Believes in capacity-building by supporting existing community-led initiatives. Trust lies with local leaders, not external organisations.
- Ama: Finds local councils' difficult stakeholders. Appreciates the concept of Abuelos.
- Barbara: Stresses the importance of neighbourhood-based solutions. Recognises tensions with publicly funded youth services and the complexities of property ownership. Questions whether organisations have the necessary skills and experience to be long-term partners.

Civic Square – Immy Kaur

Civic Square is an organisation based in Ladywood, Birmingham, dedicated to building "next-generation civic infrastructure." Their mission is to shift the perception of community assets from financial liabilities to valuable investments while emphasising the importance of physical infrastructure.

Deeply rooted in the neighbourhood, Civic Square has the local context needed for systemic interventions. They shared their 15-year journey, noting that at the start of the coalition's austerity programme, there were more community and third spaces available.

To foster community collaboration, they acquired a large commercial space and established Impact Hub Brum, a co-working and events hub. Local residents voluntarily contributed to its renovation, and at its peak, the organisation had a turnover of £750,000. However, rising rent from their private landlord made it unsustainable, leading them to discontinue the space.

Civic Square's strategy is deeply connected to climate action. In their latest development project with Urban Splash in Ladywood, they prioritise using local and sustainable materials.

The Warehouse

The Warehouse is a co-operative founded in 1977 by the local Friends of the Earth group. Initially, they operated as tenants in their current building in Digbeth, which was then owned by the Gooch Estate.

When offered the freehold, they seized the opportunity and purchased the building. Since then, they have invested in retrofitting the space, using community shares to raise funds from local investors. This has allowed them to improve insulation, install new windows, and enhance energy production.

The co-operative operates on a mixed model of volunteers and paid staff, with local Friends of the Earth members contributing their time freely.

Campaigning remains at the heart of their work, and they continue to use the hub as a base for both local and national campaigns.

Spending Down: Learning from a UK-based foundation

In 2022, the Charitable Trust Lankelly Chase (LC) announced it was starting a process to redistribute its whole endowment – "spending down" – and would eventually cease to exist as a grant making foundation. To learn from their experience and research, BT's Chair of trustees, CEO, and several team members spent an hour with LC's CEO Julian Corner and Investment Manager Dominic Burke.

Can you outline your recent timeline?

- **2012-2014:** Started using 'system change' terminology to inform the Trust's interventions
- **2016:** Started incorporating 'action inquiry' approach to their funding process
- **2018:** Internal focus and incompatibility of investments vs grants strategy became clearer and decided to recruit new board and interrogate investments
- **2019-2020:** Agreed with move to full asset approach and new trustees recruited (pre-pandemic)
- **2022:** Decided to proceed with a 'full spend down' and make public announcement
- **2022-2025:** Experienced lots of backlash, backwards move in investment, grants activity paused, most staff left or redundant. Still waiting to create a 'holding group' to make decisions about how to deploy capital.

What are your key insights so far?

- The most inspiring interventions are grounded in radical analysis and vision

- Reducing current dependencies on philanthropy and extractivist markets requires building community wealth and cultural and political power
- Philanthropic capital should be viewed as transitional capital, i.e that philanthropic assets are a primary source of capital which can finance transitions towards post-capitalist systems/ practices/ models.
- Political education and ongoing collective learning is integral to this process
- To avoid dumping risk on communities, it's important to recognise it's not just about the money. There is a pressing need to invest in capacity, administration and technical support
- Anchor in power-building and organising otherwise extractivism and accumulation will reproduce.
- Geographic differences are important.
- Be intentional and disruptive with language.

Are you planning to structure any part of the endowment as repayable finance?
The decision on how we deploy capital is a matter for a new 'holding' group, which is yet to be formed. It featured in our research, so it will potentially be one route to redistributing part of our endowment.

How is progress with your divestment process?
We have completed divestment, but have also set up a new 'low-risk' portfolio in bonds, liquidity, and fixed accounts.

What about the perspective of governance and the board?
There was a lack of clarity when new trustees were recruited in 2019-2020, and trustees felt philanthropy was too much of a contradiction, and that LC was still an organisation working in its own interest.

What does success look like?
It's difficult to say as we are engaged in an 'emergent' process, but we describe it as creating a "post-capitalist resource system." And, in the process, the dream scenario is disrupting the current frame of philanthropy in the UK and beyond.

What is your advice for the Blagrave Trust?

- Develop a strong vision and plan for spending out before announcing it

- Create a positive message about what the change in strategy will deliver
- Ensure effective relationship management with grantees and partners – do not over promise better to be over-cautious. (lots of people who thought they were on a long journey were abandoned)
- Be transparent with the Charity Commission (and any other relevant regulator) in advance of any public announcements
- Develop a communications strategy to share the news/story with different audiences ("I wish we worked with a comms agency")
- Develop a plan to care for and reduce exposure of trustees, who may be targeted by those who disagree with the decision
- Create clear boundaries for the participatory phase of the process, so that all stakeholders – grantees, staff, and other interested parties – understand where ultimate authorities lie (i.e. trustees) and make roles, responsibilities and time commitments for all (especially trustees) clear from offset.

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Other quotes

- "Used to have theories of change but have given up"
- "What would holding space for wholesale systems change look like in practice… not participatory or democratised but profoundly shifting power"
- "The first duty of trustees was to the mission and not to organisation and trustees decided that there was a more effective vehicle for achieving mission"
- "Blagrave have a clearer direction of travel"

Group investment exercise: Buying a Community Asset

This final session was a **group exercise** to explore how to assess and compare potential property investments. Each group evaluated **two properties** in a specific location, analysing key data points before selecting one property to recommend. The session then concluded with group presentations to justify their choices.

This exercise was designed to help the team:

✔️ Practice **making investment decisions** and refining your strategic approach.
✔️ Develop **research skills** by identifying and assessing relevant data sources.
✔️ Generate **insights and reflections** that could inform future investment strategies.

The following is a summary of the process.

Group #1

- **Team Members:** Geraldine, Sam, Valeria
- **Focus:** Finance & Operations

Step 1: Location Research – London

The team assessed two properties for potential investment by researching key statistics, including crime rates, demographics, housing affordability, youth services, transport links, and unemployment.

- **First property:** A large factory space on a light industrial estate in Tottenham.
- **Second property:** A high Street Retail Property in Hackney.

See the appendix for research assessment of each property.

Step 2: Exploring Key Themes

Then each group analysed both properties from a **finance & operations** perspective, listing **opportunities, barriers, and key questions**.

Tottenham (Industrial Site)

- **Opportunities:** Large space for mixed-use projects, high demand for youth services.
- **Barriers:** High crime, planning restrictions, industrial setting may not be welcoming.
- **Questions:** Is the space suitable for youth services? Would development costs outweigh benefits?

Hackney (Retail Property)

- **Opportunities:** High foot traffic, mixed-use potential, quick acquisition.
- **Barriers:** Limited space, gentrification concerns, high crime in the area.
- **Questions:** Will it be cost-effective for community use? Does the layout support accessibility?

Step 3: Development Principles & Site Selection

The team assessed **strategic fit, financial viability, and practical considerations**.

Pros & Cons Comparison

Factor	Tottenham (Industrial)	Hackney (Retail)
Accessibility	Good transport links but industrial location	Excellent footfall & transport

Size	Large, flexible for mixed-use	Small, limited development scope
Cost	High acquisition & renovation costs	More affordable but less room for expansion
Community Fit	High need, but industrial space may deter engagement	Central, well-integrated into the area

Final Selection: Both properties were considered for different strategic purposes

- **Hackney (Retail Property)** for community engagement due to its prime location.
- **Tottenham (Warehouse)** for larger-scale development despite security concerns.

Group 2:

- Team members: Tessa, Eli, and Danny
- Focus: Grant strategy

Step 1: Location Research

The team assessed two properties for potential investment by researching key statistics, including crime rates, demographics, housing affordability, youth services, transport links, and unemployment.

1. **Property 1:** A large, listed office building in Southampton

2. **Property 2:** A large former restaurant and accommodation building in central Portsmouth

See appendix for more detailed findings of this research.

Step 2: Exploring Key Themes

- **Opportunities:**

    - Strong existing partners in Southampton, including Blagrave Trust and Hampshire Community Foundation.
    - Civic Power Fund committed to investing in Hampshire.
    - Portsmouth has grassroots initiatives but lacks coordination, presenting an opportunity for structuring community work.
- **Barriers**:
    - Limited young changemaker networks in both areas.
    - Portsmouth has racial tensions and lower national funding investment.
    - Southampton faces financial instability (risk of bankruptcy).
- **Key Questions**:
    - Should investment focus on areas with existing civic infrastructure or areas that need development?
    - Can partnerships with local institutions like Portsmouth FC and policymakers be leveraged effectively?

Step 3: Property Analysis Based on Strategic Priorities

Criteria	Property 1 (Southampton)	Property 2 (Portsmouth)
Pros	Strong partner network, good location, larger building, existing advocacy connections.	High footfall, opportunity to improve community coordination, mixed-use potential.
Cons	Less accessible to young people, no green space.	Smaller, limited parking, less civic infrastructure.

Final Decision

The selection leaned towards Portsmouth because the property was a better fit and offered more opportunities for income generation. They also concluded that a hub in Southampton could serve young changemakers in Portsmouth given the proximity and connectivity between the two cities.

Group 3

- **Team Members:** Rochel, Callum, Boudicca
- **Focus:** Grant making and engagement

Step 1: Location Research

The team analysed two properties for potential investment based on key statistics such as crime rate, housing prices, demographics, youth services, transport, and unemployment.

Property 1: An Old Town Hall in Rotherham

- **Size & Income:** 27,675 sq ft, 15 retail units generating £108,000 per year (potential for £60,000 more).
- **Location:** Central Rotherham, high footfall, close to national retailers, undergoing regeneration.
- **Price:** £1,500,000.
- **Crime Rate:** 111 crimes per 1,000 residents (medium level).
- **Housing Prices:** £197,000 average home price, £637 average rent.
- **Demographics:** 91% White, low diversity, high youth population.
- **Opportunities:** High footfall, potential for community projects.
- **Barriers:** Lack of diversity, need for strong relationships.

Property 2: Anvic House (Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham)

- **Size & Income:** 13,441 sq ft, 15 tenanted units, 6 vacant units, generating £52,778 per year.
- **Location:** Jewellery Quarter, close to public transport, high student population.
- **Price:** £750,000.
- **Crime Rate:** 211 crimes per 1,000 residents (higher than Rotherham).
- **Housing Prices:** £220,724 average home price, significantly higher rents.
- **Demographics:** 68.1% BAME, younger population, higher deprivation.
- **Opportunities:** Strong creative sector, existing youth demand, potential for partnerships.
- **Barriers:** High crime rate, need for strong governance and safety measures.

Step 2: Key Themes - Community Engagement & Governance

Each property was assessed for its opportunities, barriers, and key questions.

Opportunities

- **Rotherham:** Large space, social enterprise potential, youth provision.
- **Birmingham:** High footfall, creative hub, strong existing partnerships.

Barriers

- **Rotherham:** Lack of local relationships, limited diversity.
- **Birmingham:** High crime rate, existing tenants may not align with mission.

Key Questions

- Are we best placed to support a growing/gentrifying area?
- What are local community opinions on these spaces?
- Should we let Birmingham residents decide on the best space for investment?

Step 3: Development Principles & Site Selection

- The properties were evaluated based on strategic alignment, feasibility, and impact.
- **Birmingham was preferred due to existing relationships, community engagement potential, and alignment with strategic goals.**
- **Consideration:** Should the focus be on the current Birmingham site or a different option (e.g., YARD)?

Final Thoughts

The decision heavily depends on **community input** and **existing relationships**. But Birmingham offers more immediate impact potential but requires safety and governance measures.

9. Development principles

The purpose of this section is to outline the ‘development principles’ that will inform the Blagrave Trust’s use of its financial and physical assets, how it works with local partners, and explore how it will structure its interventions:

- Prioritise working with existing partners, but stay open to finding new organisations to co-deliver our asset programme
- Prioritise investment to geographical areas where Blagrave Trust already works and has existing relationships, as much as possible. We will have a site in London, the region and one outside of those two locations.
- Our sites need to be based in a ‘thriving community’ (which we need to define in more detail), and ‘elevate’ an existing ecosystem of community projects
- Though it may be difficult to secure a site with green space in all locations, we will commit to buying at least site with access
- If the Trust becomes an ‘institutional investor’, such as buying ‘community shares’ in an asset (see definitions), it will structure it as a no-interest investment (0%)
- If BT withdraws institutional investments at any point, it will re-invest it into a sinking fund (i.e. repair and maintenance)
- We should purchase the freehold, acknowledging that we are only committing to buying freehold to ensure the land is owned by the community in perpetuity
- When we provide capital to buy a freehold, it should also come with further funding for capital works, and also provide revenue funding until the project has established its trading income. To do this, we will prioritise working in partnership with other funders so that further income can be leveraged.
- There needs to be an income stream(s) that are seen as commercially viable, future proofed, and will not be impacted too much by

economic market trends. E.g. Primary needs such as food, shelter and transport
- These asset-based developments should create jobs and apprenticeship schemes for young people
- There needs to be a robust volunteer policy to inform local involvement, i.e. how to define paid or unpaid opportunities.
- We are open to supporting aligned physical hub developments that are in planning/ in process of development rather than re-creating the wheel.

10. Site Selection Process

This section explores the key criteria for the selection of the three potential investment sites, drawing on and expanding the development principles in the previous section.

- Does it meet the needs of the young people who are facing injustice?
- Is the site, and what it can offer in a way of meeting the specific needs of disadvantaged young people, aligned to Blagrave's mission and Impacts?
- Does it build on local partnerships with trusted investors/ stakeholders/organisations/grantees?
- Does it take advantage of local policy and funding opportunities? (such as Community Asset Transfer)
- Does it allow us to leverage other funding support (i.e. is it a priority area for other funders) creating a multiplier effect for our contribution in both cash and in-kind support.
- Does it have the ability to generate enough trading or non-fixed term income to cover its core operational costs? ie Endowment/ recycled funding agreement
- Could it be ready for acquisition, development, and occupation within a reasonable time and without extensive specialist labour / bureaucracy (i.e. heritage/ planning)?

- Is it the right scale project – not too big or too small? Need to identify the critical size to be sustainable ie sufficient turnover to underpin the asset's financial viability in the long term (5yrs +)
- Does it feel right? Does it excite us? Is it something we instinctively want to be associated with and willing to invest the energy and commitment needed to make it happen (both for BGT and any delivery partners) we all need to be invested it it's success and not just a vanity project
- Are whatever governance structures that may be needed to operate the building / services acceptable to all investors/ stakeholders/ delivery partners?

11. Pathways to ownership

This section explores a typical process for transferring assets to local organisations over time, depending on a series of performance milestones. If the Trust uses this approach, it will have to tweak the following process depending on the specific situation.

I. Initial Considerations

- **Asset Review:** Identify the asset, its condition, and its current legal ownership structure.
- **Charity's Powers:** Ensure the charity has the legal power to transfer the asset under its governing documents.
- **Community Group Readiness:** Confirm the local group is properly constituted (e.g., as a Co-operative, or Trust) to take ownership.

II. Stakeholder Engagement

- **Consultation:** Engage with local stakeholders, including beneficiaries, funders, and local authorities.

- **Regulatory Compliance:** If the charity is regulated (e.g., by the Charity Commission), seek necessary approvals.

III. Due Diligence

- **Legal & Financial Checks:** Assess any restrictions on the asset, existing liabilities, or funding conditions.
- **Valuation & Survey:** Obtain an independent valuation and condition survey.

IV. Structuring the Transfer

- **Method of Transfer:** Decide on the best approach:
  - **Outright Transfer:** Full ownership transfer at no cost or nominal cost.
  - **Leasehold Transfer:** Long-term lease with community responsibilities.
  - **Asset Lock:** Restrictions ensuring continued community use.
- **Agreement Terms:** Draft legal agreements covering rights, responsibilities, and future use.

V. Legal & Regulatory Approvals

- **Charity Commission Approval:** If required, apply for consent for disposal.
- **Land Registry & Property Title Updates:** Ensure smooth legal transfer.
- **Funders' Consent:** If the asset was grant-funded, check for clawback provisions.

VI. Financial & Governance Planning

- **Business Plan:** Ensure the community group has a viable plan for sustainability.
- **Funding & Grants:** Identify potential support for ongoing maintenance and development.

VII. Completion & Handover

- **Legal Signing:** Execute the transfer agreement.
- **Operational Transition:** Handover keys, records, and management responsibilities.

- **Monitoring & Support:** Provide guidance for an initial period post-transfer.

12. Decision making

Whilst we have agreed that key decisions for the development of 'hubs' will be made at the 2025 Trustee Away day, there is a need for us to agree additional decision-making points in this journey. As such, Eli and the Blagrave team delivered some recommendations on this which were shared at the January Blagrave board meeting. They highlighted the fact that the shortlisting of 3 sites would be done at the Blagrave April Trustee Away Days (24^{th}-25^{th}) and that the Blagrave team would present a number of information papers to sit alongside this report and the ClearView Research criteria selection report and longlist, which together would provide the information for trustees to make a decision at the away day on locations.

As a reminder, Trustees agreed in addition to shortlisting options for the identification of the locations at the 2025 Trustee Away Day whilst also further fine tuning and agreeing the set of red lines, principles and considerations to guide this work forward. After the away day the Blagrave team will be equipped with rationale and 3 locations for them to commission further 'feasibility' and knowledge gathering work led by organisations based in these areas with a focus on engaging young local people authentically. Until this point Trustees should refer to the collectively agreed upon and drafted 'what, where, when document'.

Following the April decision making process, FIC Trustees will carry out further financial modelling and planning to present back to the board recommendations on how much we are to invest in these sites plus the long term grants budgets so that the wider grant making strategy can be developed.

The wider strategy will be delivered to the board in draft at the September for sign off at the November 2025 board meeting.

13. Questions for the Trust to consider

The purpose of the section is to start setting out a series of questions that the trust needs to answer about its role in the process.

- Is Blagrave Trust's main role to be the investor or developer of the proposed sites, or both acknowledging that different areas will have different needs, some areas will have more partnership opportunities and or organisations already leading this work?
- Could the Blagrave Trust initially become an 'ethical landlord' of the properties it acquires? I.e. holding the legal and maintenance responsibilities for these assets
- If this is the case, what is the 'pathway to ownership' for local organisations? And what might trigger the transfer of assets from BT to a nominated organisation (i.e. milestones)?
- Will the Trust use a covenant to protect the use of the asset for a specific purpose, or trust the local organisation to make future decisions about disposal?
- Could the current CIO take on this role as asset developer? Or would it preferably be delivered through a new special purpose vehicle?
- Who would govern this special purpose vehicle? And would it look to recruit specialists as employees or freelancers to support the process?
- Should the Trust identify a small group of existing community asset developers and allocate funding for them to invest in new assets? This could form a first stage of investment allowing the Trust to learn first-hand before choosing to develop a site themselves.
- How will the Trust maximise the involvement of young people throughout the process?
- The Trust focuses on 'centring young people', but how does this translate in terms of the governance of assets?
- How will the Trust measure the social and economic impacts on young people both throughout the process and when the new site is operational?

- Can the Trust make a broader impact by being an 'institutional investor' – purchasing equity (e.g. community shares) in new and active societies who are managing assets?
- Can its role as an investor shape the development of 'youth offers' (i.e. the renovation of an undeveloped space) in community assets that are not currently serving young people?
- Alongside grants, will BT develop a repayable finance offer – and if so, what are the terms?
- What are the opportunities to align further physical investment in place with the establishment of a 'hub'? Using the initial investment as an anchor institution for further community wealth building.
- What expertise is Blagrave missing from its team and Board that needs to be brought in to enable this exciting new direction?
- Will the Trust adopt a procurement policy that ensures it can leverage existing local resources and environmentally friendly approaches to accomplish goals where possible?
- Will the Trust use the site selection process as an open and transparent system to demonstrate how it's reached certain decisions?
- What is the level of due diligence required to assess potential location partners?
- How will the Trust develop this work in collaboration with the wider funding sector?
- How will Blagrave communicate this work to influence the sector and beyond?

14. Who we are

The Centre for Democratic Business (part of Stir to Action) is committed to advancing democracy in our workplaces and communities through partnerships with local and national government, industry bodies, membership associations, and foundations.

We host national conferences, training programmes, and offer research and consultancy services to a range of public and private institutions. **democraticbusiness.org**

Contact

Jonny Gordon-Farleigh: jonny@stirtoaction.com

15. Jargon buster

The purpose of this section is to provide definitions for phrases that are used by experts and changemakers during the Learning Journey.

Co-operative

Co-operatives are people-centred enterprises owned, controlled and run by and for their members to realise their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations. They bring people together in a democratic and equal way and members share equal voting rights regardless of the amount of capital they put into the enterprise.

Community Shares

A withdrawable, non-transferrable equity investment into a cooperative or community benefit society. It is a form of equity because the investors get a share of the organisation.

Patient Capital

A term used to describe long-term investment, in the form of debt or equity, where sustainable growth is prioritised alongside financial returns. Patient capital strategies vary between funds and business sectors, but typically see investments maintained for many years before exiting.

Public Commons Partnership

A joint enterprise that incorporates 'common associations', public bodies, and wider stakeholders in the ownership and governance of assets, ranging from coastal aquaculture and country farms to urban high streets.

Social Value Framework

A set of guidelines that require public sector organisations to consider social, environmental, and economic benefits in order to capture the difference an organisation or project can make to the communities it operates in. It encompasses a wider definition of value than simply financial outcomes.

Meanwhile Spaces

Refers to the temporary use of vacant units, usually (though not exclusively) in town/city centres, and generally at low or no rent. They are often described as 'popups' and have gained prominence as a tool of regeneration and renewal of urban centres.

Social Investment

The use of repayable finance to help an organisation achieve social purpose. Charities and social enterprises can use repayable finance to help them increase their impact on society, for example by growing their business, providing working capital for contract delivery, or buying assets.

Meanwhile leases

A legal agreement designed specifically for the use of meanwhile spaces to ensure both landlord and tenant are protected.

Covenant

A covenant is a binding agreement or promise between two or more parties. The parties agree to certain actions or to refrain from certain actions. Covenants can be formal and solemn, and can have social, legal, and religious aspects.

Regeneration

Is a multifaceted process aimed at revitalising areas that have experienced decline. It is a transformative endeavour that not only enhances the physical landscape but also strengthens the social and economic fabric of communities.

Compulsory Purchase Order

A process that allows a public authority to acquire land without the consent of the owner. In the context of compulsory purchase, land may include houses or any other buildings as well as the land itself.

Surplus

Is the profit that is reinvested into the business or community to further its social or environmental goals rather than used to maximise profits for shareholders.

Capital

A broad term for anything that gives its owner value or advantage, like a factory and its equipment, intellectual property like patents, or a company's or person's financial assets. Even though money itself can be called capital, the word is usually used to describe money used to make things or invest.

Subsidy

Any form of government support—financial or otherwise—offered to producers and (occasionally) consumers. Subsidies to producers reduce the marginal cost of supply and usually leads to an increase in the output sold of a good or service at a lower market price.

Public Sector Tender

The act of a public sector organisation buying goods or services from suppliers. The organisation will publish a public tender notice on notice boards or tender portals and suppliers will bid on it in. Tender contracts awarded by public sector organisations are a major source of high value business opportunities that can help SMEs grow and increase their market share.

16. Appendix

Investment Exercise: Stage 1 research

Group #1

Property 1: Former Factory on Industrial Estate (Tottenham)

- **Location:** Shaftesbury House, Shaftesbury Road, Tottenham, N18 1SW
- **Size:** 37,429 sq ft
- **Features:** Steel truss warehouse, mezzanine office, W/Cs, kitchenette, self-contained yard, loading area, parking.
- **Transport Links:** Close to Silver Street & White Hart Lane stations.
- **Crime Rate:** Higher than the London average (140 crimes per 1,000 people). High youth violence and gang activity.
- **Housing Costs:** 1-bed (£780 pcm), 2-bed (£1,500–£2,000), 5-bed (£3,000).
- **Demographics:** High youth population, significant levels of deprivation, high unemployment (5.9% in 2024 Q2).
- **Youth Services:** Programmes like Tottenham Hotspur Academy, Hope in Haringey, and community outreach projects.
- **Opportunities & Challenges:** Large space for mixed-use development; concerns about security, planning permissions, and cost of renovation.

Property 2: High Street Retail Property (Hackney)

- **Location:** 360 Mare Street, London, E8 1HT
- **Size:** 2,249 sq ft (5 floors)
- **Features:** Freehold, potential for mixed-use development, vacant upper floors.

- **Transport Links:** Excellent connectivity; Overground station <0.1 miles away.
- **Crime Rate:** 467 crimes per 1,000 people (high, especially shoplifting, violence, and robbery).
- **Housing Costs:** 2–3 bed flats (£1,750–£2,500).
- **Demographics:** Majority aged 20–39, high deprivation levels, lower educational attainment.
- **Youth Services:** Programs like Hackney Quest, Immediate Theatre, and Rising Tide for creative and educational support.
- **Opportunities & Challenges:** Strong footfall, easier planning for mixed-use development; concerns about limited space and gentrification impact.

Group #2

Property 1:

Property 2:

- **Crime Rate**: Portsmouth has a high crime rate (132 per 1,000 residents).
- **Housing**: Average rent for a two-bed in Portsmouth is £895; housing allowance cap is £725.
- **Demographics**: Portsmouth is densely populated, with a young and diverse population.
- **Youth Services**: Both cities have strong youth programs, including YMCA, No Limits, and local football clubs.
- **Transport Links**: Both locations have good transport, but Portsmouth has more limited parking.
- **Unemployment**: Portsmouth (4.7%) has a higher unemployment rate than the UK average (3.7%).
- **Social Infrastructure**: Southampton has more civic infrastructure and partnerships.
- **Other Factors**: Portsmouth is the second most deprived local authority in England, but has a strong commercial port economy.

Case Study One: Hastings Commons

Name	Hastings Commons
Location	Hastings, East Sussex, UK
Set up date	Hastings Commons established in 2021 from previous partnership of organisations working together since 2014
Context/purpose	A collective of organisations dedicated to revitalising neglected and challenging buildings in the White Rock area of Hastings, East Sussex. Over the last ten years, they've transformed a portfolio of difficult and derelict buildings into affordable, inclusive social areas, homes, and workspaces for the community. Their ecosystem model presents a groundbreaking, community-driven approach to regeneration, offering a refreshing alternative to conventional models that often marginalise local residents and increase inequalities.
The Buildings	**Use:** Collection of 10+ buildings. Multi-functional community space (offices, event spaces, meeting rooms, and collaborative workspaces for local businesses and social enterprises) **Total Cost of Building Development to date:** Approximately £10 million over 10 years, currently spending £11 million on 3 further developments. **Lease or Freehold:** Mix of freeholds and leaseholds, including one community asset transfer on a 125-year lease.

Name	Hastings Commons
Governance	**Hastings Commons is** delivered and supported by a group of organisations including: Hastings Commons Community Land Trust - a charitable Community Benefit Society with 660+ members (HCCLT) Hastings Commons Neighbourhood Ventures - a social enterprise property development company limited by shares, owned equally between the CLT and the two founder investor enterprises (HCNV). Living Rents (Hastings) - a subsidiary of HCNV, currently becoming a Registered Provider. Leisure & Learning (Hastings)- a registered charity (L&L). Each entity plays a different role. The CLT brings engagement and democratic governance. HCNV is able to take and hold risks which otherwise would have prevented any purchases. Living Rents manages the affordable homes and L&L brings dynamic programming. Together they allow Hastings Commons to deliver its mission to tackle dereliction, support commoning and build alternative futures, supported by a mixed financial model of earned and grant income. **Governance structure:** The Commons Board comprises all the trustees and directors of the different entities. They meet quarterly, plus an annual strategy day. There are committees for Finance, People, Development, and Commoning. The governance model and the whole 'commoning' approach places a strong emphasis on involving local people in decision-making processes and sharing visibility of operating information. This includes regular

Name	Hastings Commons
	consultations with community groups, residents, and stakeholders, the set up of working groups to oversee specific projects and an extensive and detailed set of Frequently Asked Questions.
Income	**Income generation model:** Their primary source of income comes from leasing workspace to local businesses, social enterprises and freelancers, and 12 'Living Rents' homes. They are developing a hospitality and events business. **Yearly overheads:** Across the Commons operating costs are approximately £1.5M annually, covering all staffing, utilities, and maintenance (excluding finance costs). **Future income generation plans:** There are plans to expand their event hosting and training services, which would increase their income. Additionally, they are exploring opportunities to collaborate with other organisations for joint funding and grants. **Funding:** The project has been funded through a varied combination of government grants, private investment, and crowdfunding. Going forward, they aim to be more self-sustaining, with increased income from the spaces and community-driven fundraising.
Staffing	**Staff size:** X 20 full-time staff members, plus a further 4 part-time staff. **Volunteer-Permanent staff ratio:** The volunteer-to-permanent staff ratio is roughly 2:1, with volunteers heavily involved in day-to-day activities including running the public living room, event coordination, and community outreach.

Name	Hastings Commons
Young People	**How are they involved:** Young people are actively involved, both as participants and contributors. The organisation runs an open access youth club as well as regular youth-oriented programmes such as skill-building and creative workshops. They also offer internship and mentorship opportunities, helping young people to transition into leadership roles within the organisation.
Climate	They are committed to building resilience to climate change and have focused on reducing their carbon footprint by installing energy-efficient lighting, promoting recycling, and using sustainable materials for any building upgrades. The space itself was designed with climate resilience in mind, including measures to reduce energy consumption and increase the use of natural light. In addition they have been proactive in engaging local businesses and community groups in climate-related initiatives and offering support for sustainable ventures. They are exploring further steps to become carbon-neutral in the future, such as investing in renewable energy sources and developing eco-friendly infrastructure.
Website	https://hastingscommons.com/

Name	CIVIC SQUARE Birmingham Community Interest Company

	(CIC)
Location	Birmingham, United Kingdom
Set up date	Launched in 2020 (previously Impact Hub Birmingham since 2014)
Context/ purpose	It's designed to create a vibrant, neighbourhood-driven space that focuses on building a culture of collective action, with an emphasis on connections, imagination, and local resilience. The organisation is a response to the growing need for accessible, public space that fosters collaboration and social connection in urban environments. CIVIC SQUARE's purpose is to activate a physical space for people to come together, learn, create, and organise towards the challenges and opportunities facing their neighbourhood(s).
The Buildings	Freehold: £1m Renovation cost: Expected to be c.£9m No public information on the funders.
Governance	CIVIC SQUARE operates as a Community Interest Company (CIC), which means it is governed by a board of directors and managed with a focus on public benefit rather than profit. The board includes individuals with expertise in strategy, arts, operations and learning design, as is one part of a wider global and neighbourhood advisory network to ensure the space meets the needs of local residents whilst remaining bold and ambitious in demonstrating possible futures for regenerative neighbourhood civic infrastructure to meet the scale of urgency and possibility ahead.
Income	**Income generation model**: Currently generated through a mix of earned income, philanthropy and grant funding. Previously, Impact Hub Birmingham ran ticketed events, membership schemes, and space hire that sustained their

	work. The organisation is now exploring innovative ways to gain meaningful investment into public goods such as Neighbourhood Public Square. CIVIC SQUARE are co-designing how the site will entrepreneurially sustain its activities for the long term whilst focusing on multi-capital benefits aligned to social and ecological thrivance, including the potential to build long term neighbourhood wealth.
Staffing	**Staff size:** CIVIC SQUARE has a small, dedicated team of 15 people that manage day-to-day operations, participatory programming, research, design, storytelling, nurturing relationships and more. This is complemented by a larger ecosystem of core partners working together towards ambitious demonstration projects. **Volunteer-permanent staff ratio:** Everyone working as part of CIVIC SQUARE's activity is paid, but active involvement and open co-design with many people as part of the fabric of the wider neighbourhood and city over many years is a foundational purpose of their public activities, learning programmes and wider invitations.
Young People	**How they are involved:** Young people are actively engaged at CIVIC SQUARE through a variety of programmes, events, and initiatives that encourage creative expression, leadership, and community-building. They have opportunities to participate in workshops, attend events, and explore, re-imagine and tangible help to shape the co-design of the infrastructure around them. **Upskilling:** There's a strong emphasis on developing intergenerational organising spaces, offering skills exchanges, making strong connections with local education institutions, and offering placements for young people to take on roles in the organisation. They encourage children and young people's involvement in both the learning and practical co-building of their demonstrators, ensuring a pipeline for practitioners equipped with the skills and

	knowledge to co-lead their own transitions.
Climate	**Building resilience:** CIVIC SQUARE is deeply committed to circular regenerative principles in its physical infrastructure design, systems and processes (including finance and stewardship), and hosting and public programming. The retrofit of their building is being designed to maximise reuse, work with natural materials from the local region, and generate solar power for the neighbourhood, designed to distribute resources, tools, energy, and relationships with a focus on social and ecological regeneration. **Plans for climate adaptation:** Looking to the future, CIVIC SQUARE is planning further steps to integrate climate resilience throughout its operations. This includes sharing regenerative practices within the neighbourhood, supporting justice and liberation movements for all peoples, and ensuring that the building and wider neighbourhood is as prepared as possible for climate-related challenges.
Website	https://civicsquare.cc/

Name	Kitty’s Launderette
Location	Liverpool, UK
Set up date	Established in 2019
Context/ purpose	Kitty’s Launderette is a co-operatively run social enterprise aiming to address multiple local community challenges. The purpose of the organisation is to provide a welcoming and accessible space for local people to do their laundry while also providing a range of community services. This initiative responds to the lack of accessible public spaces in certain areas and seeks to provide a

	warm, supportive environment for vulnerable groups in the community. The launderette is a space where individuals can receive practical support, like access to laundry services, while also building a sense of belonging and community.
The Buildings	The Laundrette operates from a privately owned building in Anfield, North Liverpool. The launderette has agreed to a 15 year lease to ensure sustainability and enable the significant investment in the spaces for utilities and fit out. The lease ensures the launderette pays below market rent, currently around £10K per year. The launderette pays for all repairs, maintenance and checks on the leased space.
Governance	Internally they operate as a 'worker-led community co-op', i.e. in practical governance terms the worker team run the business day to day in a 'flat' structure, with different workers leading in different core areas. A smaller number of the ‘worker members’ also sit on the non executive board alongside ‘community members’ - which are customers, local residents and supporters, as well as co-opted members for skills and experience. The non executive board provides support where needed to the team and meets quarterly to provide transparency, accountability and feed into strategy. Both worker members and community members are elected to the board by the members at the Annual General Meeting.
Income	**Income generation model:** Kitty's Launderette currently generates approximately 75% of their income through the provision of laundry services to both the general public and other local businesses. Kitty’s Launderette also receives funding through grants and donations to support its social mission and activities. **Future:** Kitty’s Launderette is planning to expand its model by introducing additional laundry services, community programs and partnerships with local organisations.

Staffing	**Staff size:** Kitty's Launderette has 10 Real Living Wage workers/ Employees, 80% of whom live in walking distance to the launderette. **Volunteer-Permanent staff:** Operations are run almost entirely by paid workers. The only volunteers Kitty's have are the non executive board and some community members who volunteer at events. They do have ambitions to make more volunteer roles available for the benefit of the community but have always been committed to the business being sustained through paid work.
Young People	Local young people play a significant role in Kitty's Launderette and make up more than 50% of the worker team. Several young workers have been trained up to occupy roles of significant responsibility such as Finance, community engagement and events and activities. Training and skills development opportunities are central to Kitty's Launderette, creating pathways for local youth to transition into long-term employment and leadership positions.
Climate	Kitty's Launderette was established with sustainability as central to their business model. There is no gas on premises and all the machines run on electricity from 100% renewable sources. They have high quality, efficient Miele washers and driers (five of each in various sizes) They also offer an ecological alternative to Chemical based dry cleaning. They use biodegradable and reusable bags for all services and ecological detergents in their service washes as well as selling a range of eco cleaning products in the launderette. They are currently working to purchase an electric van to enable sustainable laundry delivery.
Website	https://www.kittyslaunderette.org.uk/

Name	Kingsley Hall
Location	Bristol, UK
Set up date	1625 Independent People have been supporting young people experiencing homelessness and disadvantage for over 40 years. The Kingsley Hall Heritage Project (KHHP) was launched to transform the Grade II* listed Kingsley Hall into a vibrant community hub.
Context/purpose	Youth homelessness remains a critical issue in the UK, with young people facing barriers to stable housing, education, and employment. 1625 Independent People supports over 1,600 young people annually, helping them transition into independence. Kingsley Hall will serve as a safe, supportive environment where young people can rebuild their lives, develop skills, and engage with their community.
The Buildings	**Use:** Kingsley Hall is being redeveloped into a multi-purpose community hub that will provide affordable homes for young homeless people and care leavers. The space will also include a youth-led social enterprise café and training kitchen, which will offer work experience and paid traineeships. In addition, it will house safe and welcoming spaces designed to foster wellbeing and community connections, as well as dedicated training and teaching areas to help young people re-engage in education, training, and employment. A new roof garden will also be developed to improve green space and promote environmental sustainability. **Total Cost of Building Development to date:** The project is

Name	Kingsley Hall
	budgeted to cost £7.3m in total **Lease or Freehold:** 16-25 Independent People own the freehold and it has been in their hands since the organisation was founded after the merger of two youth housing associations in Bristol in the 1980s.
Governance	1625 Independent People operates as both a registered charity and a Community Benefit Society (CBS), ensuring a democratic governance model that prioritizes community and social impact. The CBS structure allows for member participation in decision-making, with young people, staff, and stakeholders having a say in the organization's direction. It is overseen by a Board of Trustees, responsible for strategic leadership and financial oversight, alongside an executive leadership team.
Income	**Income generation model:** The project is funded through a combination of grants, donations, and public sector support. **Future income generation plans:** Once the build is complete they hope to generate income through their social enterprise café and through grants and local authority service contracts. **Funding:** The project is 60% funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (£4.7m) with the other 40% of funding coming from the Local Authority, a public appeal, and other smaller trust and foundation funding.
Staffing	This project is supported by three full time roles (Participation Manager, Senior Heritage Coordinator, Project Support Worker) and three part time roles (Consultant Construction Manager, Project Manager, Project Support

Name	Kingsley Hall
	Officer). Volunteers and contractors also play a significant role.
Young People	**How are they involved:** The Heritage Youth Board plays a key role in co-designing the renovation of Kingsley Hall and contributing to business planning and governance discussions. Young people are actively involved in shaping services, governance structures, and creative heritage projects. 7 young people have also been offered paid 6-month trainee positions throughout the projects 5-year timeline, as well as 5 young people offered full-time apprentice positions (one per year).
Climate	Kingsley Hall integrates sustainability initiatives such as energy-efficient building features and climate resilience measures. The new roof garden will provide green space and learning opportunities, while future plans include exploring renewable energy solutions and further developing environmental sustainability initiatives.
Website	https://www.1625ip.co.uk/kingsley-hall-making-young-lives-better/

Name	The Liberation Centre
Location	Brixton, London, UK
Set up date	The Liberation Centre is a project led by The Advocacy Academy started in early 2024, with the build completed in

Name	The Liberation Centre
	November 2024 and the space opening for external bookings in January 2025.
Context/purpose	The Liberation Centre is a groundbreaking youth and community space in Brixton, London, developed by The Advocacy Academy. It serves as a hub for national youth organisers and local intergenerational organising to flourish.
The Buildings	**Use:** The Liberation Centre spans two floors and is designed to be fully accessible. It features large and small meeting spaces for events, a kitchen with a community fridge and pantry, a quiet room for reflection or therapeutic practices, and a library. The centre offers affordable co-working spaces for individuals, groups, organizations, or businesses aligned with its mission. Accessibility features include a working lift, gender-neutral toilets, and baby-changing facilities. **Total Cost of Building Development to date:** The redevelopment was £350K in total. **Lease or Freehold:** The centre is leased from Lambeth Council on a long-term, low-rent basis for ten years, with an option to extend for another ten years.
Governance	The Advocacy Academy is a registered charity led by a Board of Trustees responsible for strategic direction and financial oversight. A key aspect of the Liberation Centre project is its commitment to youth-led governance. The Advocacy Academy's Membership Working Group, made up of alumni from their youth programmes, is conducting a six-month audit to evaluate how the centre is used and will lead

Name	The Liberation Centre
	intergenerational spaces to develop safe and inclusive policies. Young people will play a central role in shaping decisions, ensuring that the space meets their needs.
Income	**Income generation model:** The Liberation Centre generates income through a mix of venue hire, co-working space rental, and philanthropic funding. **Yearly overheads:** The yearly upkeep of the building is minimal due to the peppercorn lease from the council. The main cost is the staffing to manage the building. **Future income generation plans:** The Liberation Centre aims to develop revenue-generating collaborations with aligned institutions. **Funding:** They have secured the majority of funding from Trust and Foundation. They also launched a public appeal, however, the fundraising from this was relatively minimal.
Staffing	**Staff size:** The Advocacy Academy is supported by a dedicated team of circa 20 staff members. There is a team of two that lead their 'Community' work which includes management of the space. The team work closely with the voluntary 'Membership Working Group'.
Young People	**How are they involved:** Young people are at the heart of The Liberation Centre's mission. The centre is designed as a space where youth-led activism and social justice campaigns can flourish, offering free and/or discounted officer and meeting space for youth-led groups. The Advocacy Academy's main programmes will be delivered from the space, including their flagship youth organising training programmes, as well as a new open-access youth work offer.

Name	The Liberation Centre
Climate	The Liberation Centre promotes sustainability by fostering community collaboration and resource sharing. While specific environmental initiatives are still in development, the centre prioritises accessibility, social responsibility, and sustainable community-building practices.
Website	https://theliberationcentre.com/ https://www.theadvocacyacademy.com/

Expert resources

Throughout the Learning Journey, we shared a series of newsletters which defined key terms, shared tools, and signposted to expert resources for further learning.

- Newsletter: Learning Journey #1
- Newsletter: Learning Journey #2
- Newsletter: Learning Journey #3

Extracted resource list

Blog post: Community Wealth Building: Reorganising an Economy for All

Video: Take Back the High Street – Power to Change campaign

Video: What are community shares? An animated guide

Article: Project spotlight: Kitty's Launderette

Video: What is a community business?

Video: New Social Spaces: who owns them?

Video: A healthy economy should be designed to thrive, not grow – Kate Raworth

Podcast: The Alternatives: how Preston took back control

Website: Project spotlight: Hastings Commons

Video: Retrofit Reimagined: The Future Is Already Here

Video: The YARD that MAIA built: Growing an ecosystem of support for artists in Birmingham

Website: Project spotlight: The Warehouse – Climate Emergency Centre