



Mapping the Field of Community Asset Development in England

Research Brief

June 2025

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Blaggrave Trust

Blaggrave is an independent charity dedicated to serving young people who are challenging and experiencing injustice in their individual lives and within society. We hold investments of c. £40 million, which along with other income sources, funds all the work we do including grant-making.

Context

Over the past few decades, the UK's co-operative economy and community assets have faced steady erosion, marked by the closure or privatisation of libraries, youth centres, community spaces and other vital social infrastructure. Despite efforts to promote community ownership and local stewardship—through initiatives like the Community Ownership Fund or asset transfer policies—many of these gains remain fragile, underfunded, and unevenly distributed. Meanwhile, the broader ecosystem that once nurtured co-operative enterprise and civic action has thinned, with fewer opportunities for younger generations to build the skills, networks, and confidence to lead. As experienced asset developers retire or burn out, there is an urgent need to invest in a new generation of community leaders—equipped not only to acquire and manage assets, but to reimagine them as tools for social justice, climate action, and youth-led change.

This is a pivotal moment. With political will building around neighbourhood power and community ownership, there is a rare opportunity to lay the foundations for long-term, locally rooted renewal. But policy alone will not be enough. What's needed is deep, patient investment in people and place—supporting emerging leaders to gain practical experience, build confidence, and stay embedded in the work for the long haul. Through greater investment in the next generation of community asset developers—particularly those from underrepresented communities—there is an opportunity to build the skills and networks needed to steward land and buildings for generations to come, ensuring the community power agenda is not just rhetorical, but real and lasting.

Purpose

We are looking for a researcher (individuals or a collective) to support our developing understanding regarding the role of assets in supporting social change (with young people at the centre), by producing mapping to strengthen our understanding of the UK

field of community asset development/management. We are particularly interested in infrastructure that supports young people and communities that face social and economic barriers to owning and managing assets.

Our current knowledge of the field is somewhat limited, however from conversations to date we are aware of a range of actors working in the field of community asset development that describe their work in different terms, whilst all working towards similar aims. These actors may describe themselves as working in the new economy, solidarity economy, land justice movement, community wealth building, cooperative movement, social enterprise movement, building alternatives, community business sector, wider social movement spaces, or as local community organisers. We see actors in all spaces supporting vital work that is supporting the transition of assets back into community ownership/stewardship.

We expect this research to look across these groups of actors and map the full landscape of community asset development/community wealth building infrastructure happening in the UK, with a specific focus on those that involves or is led by young people and communities that face social and economic barriers to owning and managing assets.

We expect this research to mainly focus on national infrastructure across England, as well as highlight pioneering, localised infrastructure that could be scaled or replicated elsewhere. We would also be interested in the research looking further afield to other nations in the UK, and international examples of successful infrastructure/field building projects that have supported the strengthening and diversification of the community asset stewardship movement.

We see infrastructure that you may include in your research including but not being limited to:

- Training and capacity building programmes on the practicalities and theory of community asset development/community wealth building
- Local authority/government support for community asset development and stewardship.
- Events and conferences for community wealth building / community asset developers.
- Funders that are resourcing asset development/transfers/stewardship, as well as other types of financing and investment vehicles that support the field.
- Membership bodies, communities of practice, and support organisations.
- Key actors leading the field, sharing practice, and mentoring others at an earlier stage.
- Campaigns and groups advocating for legislative and policy change to support greater community-led asset development and ownership.
- Places to trouble shoot when you are in different stages of the community asset development and stewardship process.

- Consultancies that support this work be this operational, strategic or fundraising.
- Academics and thinkers supporting the evidence base for this work.

We want this research to build on existing research and platform work and networks that already exist, not duplicate, growing the knowledge base of the field and highlighting potential gaps/opportunities that need resourcing.

Audience

Primary audience: This research is intended to support funders who are investing, or considering investment, in community asset development and long-term stewardship. It will inform our own strategic approach in this space, while also aiming to catalyse greater alignment and collaboration among other funders with shared interests.

Secondary audience: We also hope this research will offer a broad, accessible resource for practitioners, intermediaries, and advocates—helping them navigate the current landscape, identify gaps and opportunities, and make the case for stronger, more sustained support to grow and strengthen the community asset movement.

Deliverables

We are keen for this mapping to build both the qualitative and quantitative picture. We intend for this to look like a report, however, intend for the findings to be turned into something more visual to engage a wider audience.

We see the report including:

1. Mapping of the current field of community asset development in the UK.
2. Recommendations for how Blaggrave and other funders could potentially support the growth of the field through strategic infrastructure investment.

Contract and timeline

The contract will be for 8-10 weeks. We expect all deliverables to be completed by w/c 6th October. We are open and flexible to the best ways to structure the project and for you to communicate with us, but at a minimum, expect a mid-point check-in meeting. If this timeline does not feel appropriate, we are open to discussing alternatives approaches.

Key dates	
Sun 20 th July	Deadline for application
w/c 28 th July	Interviews of shortlisted proposals
w/c 4 th Aug	Offer and contract
w/c 11 th Aug	Project commences
w/c 8 th Sep	Mid-point check in
w/c 6 th Oct	Deadline for deliverables

Budget

Up to £15,000 (inclusive of VAT) is available for this project. Please state in your proposal how much you would require for this work and a topline overview of how your budget would break down. We expect you to budget for paying for the time and expertise of anyone you have consulted or spoken with (not including Blaggrave staff).

Who we would like to work with

We are keen to work with people with significant knowledge and experience of community asset development, recognising that this a gap within our own team. We want our own assumptions to be challenged by appointing someone who is embedded in the space, with more advanced theory and thinking to our own.

Skills, knowledge and experience expected

Skills

- Strong research and communication skills.
- Ability to synthesize complex information in ways that are accessible and clear, defining any jargon used.

Knowledge and expertise

- Understanding of the UK funding landscape.
- Experience and understanding of the community asset development and management.
- Strong networks and credibility with key actors across the field.
- Experience of completing similar research and learning work.

Commitment

- Passionate about young people leading change.
- Committed to centring anti-oppression across your practice.

How to apply

Please contact Callum Pethick (callum.pethick@blagravetrust.org) with your written proposal by end of day Sunday 20th July. We expect to invite shortlisted proposals for interviews online on either 30th July or 31st July, so please keep availability for these dates. Your written proposal should be no more than 2-3 pages of A4.

In your application we expect you to include:

- Your approach to this work and how you would structure it, including a top line timeline and budget.
- Your reflections on the brief above and whether/how you would attempt to meet the outcomes and deliverables.
- Your experience of the field of practice and strong networks within it.

- Examples of your track record of carrying out work of this nature (can be submitted as links or attachments).
- Details of two referees.

We are happy to answer any questions you may have before submitting your overview. Please contact Callum at the above address to set up a call or ask any questions.