



## Community Land Trusts conference

**Date of speech** 29 June 2010

**Location** London

**Event summary** Speech by Housing Minister Grant Shapps to the Community Land Trusts Conference.

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*Transcript of the speech as delivered.*

Last year I talked about my enthusiasm for Community Land Trusts but I wasn't able to do much more about it.

But now I am Minister for Housing and Local Government I have the opportunity to transfer power to where it really belongs - local communities.

So this year I am going to be able to do what I said I wanted to do last year.

Well actually it's more the case that you and thousands like you will be able to do what you want with CLTs.

I visited the building site which was the CLT in Rock in Cornwall several years ago.

That visit helped me see the enormous potential for CLTs.

Inspired by what I'd seen I worked to persuade the last government to recognise CLTs in law through a clause in the Housing and Regeneration Bill 2008, in order to help secure financing elsewhere.

I got to see the Rock CLT completed when I visited again last winter.

But now there is more to do.

In opposition I said that if we won the election we would start a revolution - where communities would get involved in providing homes for themselves.

Today it's time to start that revolution.

But don't worry, I'm not asking you to join me at the barricades - this will be a very English revolution.

But it will still be dramatic.

And long lasting.

We will turn things upside down.

And for the first time it will be communities, not central Government, who decide what happens in their local area.

This particular revolution? Well, it started with little more than a Task Force. I commissioned Dr Karl Dayson, from the University of Salford, to lead it.

I was amazed to read in his report that civil servants were apparently worried that CLTs would become a 'charter for cults and extreme political groups'.

Now I don't know if the penpushers were simply worried that the author Karl Dayson shared his first name with the 19th century author of the Communist Manifesto!

But looking around this auditorium you lot don't look like members of a cult or extreme political organisation. You just look like people who want to get local housebuilding going again.

I would like to thank the taskforce which has provided me with some great ideas about the lessons that we can learn.

I've also heard from many of you about your struggle with bureaucracy and financing.

Some of you may be hoping that more money will now be available. I need to be honest with you.

Community based housing bodies like CLTs are going to have to work within the same financial constraints as everyone else.

But I think in your hearts you know that Government funding is not the answer.

In fact the bureaucracy that comes with Government cash can sometimes stifle plans.

I know you're involved in workshops here looking at financing options.

And I will work hard to help you find the answers.

For instance, somewhat surprisingly, even the local tier of government sometimes struggles to transfer control to local communities.

That is why I now want to widen opportunities for communities to shape what happens next.

I want to use your experience to create a model for Local Housing Trusts.

The core of the proposal is something you will be familiar with. We want local people to decide what happens in their community.

The main difference is that I believe that a community should be able to proceed with developing new homes - where there is strong local support - without specific planning applications.

LHTs will have to show that they have the overwhelming backing from people living in the area and they will need to meet some basic planning criteria to make their proposals sound.

But essentially I want communities to have the freedom to decide on the type and quantity of housing without external restrictions imposed by a centralised planning system.

And I've no doubt that many schemes will seek to provide more affordable homes in these villages. People want to help young people to stay in their community.

Villages may also want to build some housing to sell, sheltered housing for the elderly, or even set aside plots for people to build their own homes.

It will be up to the Local Housing Trust.

They will be able to make a judgement about how best to invest in their community and meet its needs.

For instance, they might offer long-term low rent for local shops, a community hall, or a sports facility.

Once the new development has been built, Trusts will be expected to invest any financial profits back into the community.

And the land will remain in the Trust for local benefit forever - regardless of what happens to the homes built on top.

People have waited long enough for a model that is on their side rather than on the side of the bureaucrat.

I want to unlock the passion and drive of these communities.

I want to free them to realise their vision.

I can announce today that I intend to take the necessary legislation through the forthcoming Localism Bill.

I want the first LHTs to be under way as soon as possible.

I will work with you to make sure the journey you've begun brings the success you deserve.

These are exciting times for you.

Revolutionary times.

So let's finally bring Community Land Trusts home for good.

Thank you.