

The Future of Community Ownership in Stroud District

20th September 2024

Participants:

Organisations involved in Community Land or Buildings

- 1. Max Comfort – Stroud Common Wealth**
- 2. Ben Challis – Heavens Valley Action Group**
- 3. Fiona Ellis – Heavens Valley Action Group**
- 4. Anna Bolland – Creative Sustainability/ Fromehall Mill**
- 5. Gabriel Kaye – Biodynamic Land Trust**
- 6. Mark Harrison – Folly Wood**
- 7. Martin Jakes – Slade bank woods and Folly Wood**
- 8. Mark Harrison – Folly Wood**
- 9. Jeannie Ireland – Landwise and Kindling Indigenous**
- 10. Will Mansell – Grace Network**
- 11. David Elford – SVA, Goods Shed Town Hall and Library**
- 12. Robin Ellis-Cockcroft – RYSE**
- 13. Simon Jacobson – Trinity Rooms**
- 14. Sarah Frazer – Network of Stroud Hubs**
- 15. Kevin Ashby – Stroud Earth Community**

Town Council, District Council, County Council and MP

- 16.Simon Opher – MP**
- 17.Tim Davies – Simon’s chief of staff**
- 18.David Drew – Gloc County Council**
- 19.Andrew Cummings – SDC**
- 20.Trisha Watson - SDC**
- 21.Alison Fisk – SDC**
- 22.Chloe Turner – Gloc County Council and SDC**
- 23.Lucas Schoemaker – SDC and STC**
- 24.Laura Beattie – STC**

Commons Folk

- 25.Dave Darby – Stroud Housing Commons**
- 26.Jo Woofall – Stroud Commons and Stroud Land Commons**
- 27.Nick Weir – Stroud Land Commons and Open Food Network**
- 28.Oli Rodker – Stroud Land Commons and Ecological Land Coop**
- 29.Chikara Shimasaki – Stroud Commons and Climbing Commons**

30. **JozetteJ Khimba – Stroud Commons**

31. **Michael Love – Climbing commons**

32. **Ama Crowe – Stroud Land Commons and Common Soil**

33. **Josie Cowgill – Stroud Land Commons and Trinity Rooms**

34. **Terri Hathaway – will join Stroud Land Commons**

Others

35. **Ella Taylor**

36. **Ricardo Pereira**

Presentation of [the Cauldron proposal](#)

Actions:

Chik – mapping of skills/needs Anyone interested please set up 1:1 with Chik to map and share vision/needs. [Click here to contact Chik](#)

David Elford (progressor of Goods Shed ownership for SVA) willing to work on a draft mem and arts for the Cauldron concept

Everyone: if you are part of a Stroud District organisation with land or buildings in community ownership please add your organisation to [this document](#)

Additional notes reflections during Q&A:

Can we look at 2 or 3 existing projects and use these as ‘models’ for how the cauldron commons could work?

A series of focused meetings with people who would be practically involved in projects?

Core values/vision needs to be super clarified.

Practical support for existing projects that are in need right now.

Identifying sociocratic circles we need – getting a series of autonomous meetings planned/organised which could get things moving.

The people who offered to be in these planning circles have been put in touch with each other directly:

User group

- Governance group
- Investor group
- Steward group
- Custodian group

Three Questions asked of those gathered:

A) What do you like about this proposal?

The full list of responses is included below. This is a summary:

- The Vision and impetus behind it.
- Shared resources: experience, knowledge, legal structures, admin, volunteer might and the increased potential this brings.
- Shared responsibility and shared risk
- Collaborative nature and the trust this can instil in potential supporters.
- Could lock in investment locally preventing wealth from leaching out.
- Access to wider range of funders and investors and potential shared bid writing
- Opportunity to build a fund that is ready to be accessed should land or buildings become available.
- The community scale and scope of what can be achieved together. This can amplify smaller organisations.
- Opportunity to forge a path to community ownership, making it easier for those that follow by helping to overcome barriers/jump through hoops.
- Flexibility – allowing space for different types of projects, old and new, big and small.

- Work is in progress but is open to being clarified and improved.
- Ultimately we'll have an increased number of community assets serving all members of the community at every stage of life.
- Radical opportunity for system change.

B) What do you feel needs more work / changing?

There were lots of responses to this. These are included in detail below including our later answers to many of your questions (see below). There were four main categories of additional work needed.

- Clarification of the model
- Details of how investment will work
- Accessibility and inclusivity
- Conflict and wellbeing

C) What are the next steps to take?

The full list of responses is included below. They fall into 8 themes:

1. Wider involvement (working and social involvement)
2. Skills/participating organisations directory
3. Links to expertise/advisors
4. Pilot/worked examples for range of property types/comparison with current investments
5. Lobbying/co-ordinate with Simon, government
6. Funding - initial pot, funding sources
7. Clarity of structure, set up organisation ready to receive funds
8. Investigate needs of existing organisations, links to Cauldron

Full list of responses for A - **What do you like about this proposal?**

Overall intent and vision. It's bold!

The name is GREAT! The 'Cauldron' – it is an intensely feminine symbol in lots of ways, it also has deep cultural/mythical roots, it feels appropriate in all sorts of ways I could go into more detail about but perhaps best to leave it as it is. I'd like that name label to remain personally as letting go of patriarchal dominance and our conditioning is a hard task for us all, but to promote such a word label as 'Cauldron' does a lot for me, in reclaiming so much that has been stripped from us ...

Generating change; information exchange; sharing responsibility

Radical systems change; robustly protective; collaborative relational; community scale

Access to funders; unblocking investment locally and preventing that wealth leaching out.

The scope, the practical approach, the detail, the amount of thinking gone into it already; the flexibility and most importantly, the fact that it is well in progress and still open to clarity and improvement.

Maintaining what is already in community ownership and increasing the number of those community assets.

Scale! The potential that through this model we can really start to scale up, be building alternative economy and meet the crises we face.

Ability of very small organisations to amplify, reach a potential, using the collective 'power'.

It is the utilisation of the principles of cooperation and collaboration rather than the old paradigm competition and is therefore shifting us into alignment with the New Earth and generating the beginnings of unity consciousness.

The collegiate nature – but remember competition remains!

Opportunity to share knowledge of how to overcome practical barriers.

I like that users have support via stewards to focus on their initiatives and separate the running of the Cauldron from the mission of each initiative. I like the judicial oversight element and the commitment towards principles of equity and community.

I like the idea of having a central group of 'experts' and us all working together.

Collaboration and sense of community; that feeling of being part of something BIG that is working for transformation, beauty, joy and the satisfaction of winning together!

If liquid, quick access to capital funding can make all the difference and reduce debt burden. Good! (For Simon O – ACV legislation essential to support this – look at Scotland!

Collective negotiation can give confidence (?) to public/? that bids for property etc and sustainable – this idea would give that (couldn't properly read this one!)

A common resource for bid writing and admin; the aim to protect these assets for perpetuity; an intention of flexibility for different types of projects, old and new.

Bringing together existing experiences via a group like this. The increased potential for the community; skills/expertise; vision/inspiration. It can build Trust between organisations in Stroud. Shared technical resource/expertise/knowledge and experience very useful(could you add volunteer rights?). The possibility of pooling resources to enable organisations to benefit e.g. more effective fund-raising/legal structures. Pooling or admin/central office tasks. Pooled responsibilities for perpetual community control. Sharing experience, knowledge, resources. Communalising resources in larger structures. Really like what's driving this.

Off the shelf models within the current economic/regulatory system to buy things quickly. Expertise and professional services so each user group doesn't have to reinvent the wheel.

Pot of central funding to facilitate rapid purchase. Can build a fund so that we can buy land/property when it becomes available. Attracts substantial capital/quick response to market offers/spreads the risk.

All the people in the room!! Cauldron stewards providing publicity/admin/expertise and networking. Piloting the Commons Voucher model. Cauldron generating and holding cash investment fund ready to buy community assets.

Full list of responses to question B - **What do you feel needs further work/ changing?**

The following relate to clarifying

Governance rules to protect local community sovereignty and co-production crucial – how do you stop the Cauldron's rules overriding this?

Greater clarity on the degrees of involvement that are possible e.g use of stewards only or source of purchase funding?

Identify and articulate the benefits and risks – not clear enough how it will work; need more non-technical explanations. Resolving all the details. Needs more work. Optimum size? Rules. Cumbersomeness.

Understanding how community organisations in areas of deeper deprivation will be able to participate.

Clarity about the Cauldron serving two broad functions: shorter term – getting stewards functions up and running a.s.a.p. for existing and new projects and demonstrating the voucher commons system in real life i.e. with a pilot.

How to resolve issue for forms of community use which derive primarily/only from social value. w/o this do you deliver radical outcomes and really empower communities? Do you divert investors from purely social projects?

How do different kinds of assets slot into the whole and its mechanism.? The custodian rules: how are they chosen? What do they guard? (general or specific objectives of members assets)

Efficiency; trust; asset lock; funding

More work: are stewards a common resource e.g. freelance helpers (or do they enforce how rules are applied?)

The following relate to investment

A working example of the funding model. Definitely need worked examples. Tangible benefits to all Cauldron groups need to be clearer. Explanations needs to be clearer and I would like a worked example.

Further work on how existing asset holding organisations could relate to the Cauldron. More clarity on funding arrangements.

Tax issues on money held in the Cauldron. Liquidity – how people can trust to invest? The mechanism for bringing investors/funders in.

The voucher system needs to be able to work for different types including investing in social and cultural activities.

Possibly need significant housing assets to provide return on investment, not going to be possible for most community land/projects?

Bank loans are currently 7.5% - costs for tenants needs to be less. The return on trad. Investment is more than 4%

Trusts and Foundations: they are changing, want to build community wealth. Need to present them with business case that achieves more % then current investments.

As an investor, the complexity of the model is off-putting. Would you lose some investors by de-linking from the hyper local project e.g. pub? Need to include a way to maintain that connection.

Is it too central? Overly bureaucratic? Protection against 'run on bank'. Need more clarity on the financial flows.

Accessibility and inclusivity

Plain English. Crystal clear. Make the model simpler.

The language, terms, purpose and details should be crystal clear for anyone without any degree of knowledge and expertise on the subject so that anyone feels encouraged to be involved, regardless of their background. This very much includes the way the information is displayed and presented aesthetically.

How can this work be of benefit to communities in areas of high deprivation?

Commitment to hold space for the natural world biodiversity etc to have a voice in council for decision-making.

Conflict and wellbeing

More information about how we deal with arguments. Clarifying the political and personal differences that already exist and how we hold those without it fracturing the structure.

In the steward group or somewhere there needs to be care holders/compassionate listeners who are able to support the emotional wellbeing of anyone who is stressed or overwhelmed in midst of projects. It would be good to have several such individuals who can listen to stress, those needing to speak their needs who are not able to in bigger group, who need a sounding board that such provision would allow. To neglect wellbeing of participants in the Cauldron is falling into the trap of the old paradigm.

The following relate to other matters/suggestions:

Why can't we do a big Land Trust that pools risk?

Voucher system for non-profit orientated initiatives. Needs work avoiding uniformness risk aversion.

How it all gets up and running in shorter timescale to meet need and wishes of interested organisations. Needs development maintaining individual spiderwebs!

Advocacy element – whilst creating a new system, interventions into the existing system could be powerful?

Stakeholder mapping needs analysis, decision-making.

Broader range of expertise in steward group – community groups are often ill-equipped to manage a building in wider sense e.g. repairs.

Full list of responses to question C - **What are the next steps to take?**

Central funding pot for pioneer investors? Lobby Trusts and Foundations for initial investment (Somerfield IS listening)

Housing pioneer project as alternative to pension investment (income generating). Trial on one purchase. Small place-based pilot. Working examples would be really helpful i.e. how would it look for a pub, a community hub, a piece of woodland?

Model comparing risks and returns of this model with existing investments – to clarify for investors the pros and cons which also exist in other investments e.g. run on bank.

Small steering/research group who have the will, energy, skills etc to set out an understandable example – a business plan. Do three case studies to demonstrate how this system works for different types of models e.g. housing, social and cultural (village green), land for food and farming.

Clarity of structure and function. Commitment to involvement by organisations/individuals. Draft out straightforward 'Cauldron' remit – bullet points.

Everyone to add details of their organisations to the shared document. Issue a Directory of Groups, Individuals and Projects in order to inform everyone and to facilitate possible collaborations. Directory of organisations and individuals.

Set up a CBS asap to attract and hold funds specifically for investment and assets. Set up Cauldron website asap to promote what we're doing and attract investment and donations.

Find out what current organisations with/acquiring assets would be interested in working together on.

Invite more people and organisations to get involved. Promote and divulge far and wide – consider changing the term ‘Cauldron’ for something less ambiguous and more relatable.

Directory of skills – suggestion from Max, Chik has a map. List of trusted advisors for all to use – grant writing, charity/coop/legal structure advice, legal support to plan/buy/support etc.

Schedule to structure the stewards, initiate legal structure. Think what the ask might be of wider stakeholders e.g. municipal organisations.

Who will hold the vision now and keep convening? Broader involvement across this network in subgroups working up examples.

More events (not just meetings) to build mutual trust.

Group that is working with Simon O. on key asks for Labour gov. Development of governance and values. In depth meeting with existing community owned assets. Initial big funding bids to create big pot?

Action for sociocracy circles might be: create a fundraising circle; a legal and governance circle; outreach and communication circle – which might have many subgroups.

Everyone interested in joining the following planning circles added their names to the these groups to be formed:

- User group
- Governance group
- Investor group
- Steward group
- Custodian group

There were [these couple of notes](#) that we couldn't read. If you can interpret them please type the note up here. Here's a start...

1. Conflict between individual elements (and individuals) will have to be mitigated?? somehow. The volatility??? is unlimited?? with regard to wars. How overcome?
2. The Cauldron could suffer ? ? ? ? element bringing down ? of the organisation. What safeguards will be put in place to prevent this happening?

