



Want to make the most of your community's assets?

Tools for community asset development and ownership

Many communities in Wiltshire are keen to secure the future of much loved local facilities such as pubs and village halls and would like to see the best possible use of other assets such as high street shops and derelict land.

Community asset ownership can be one way of channeling the resourcefulness of local groups to take over and transform properties for the benefit of the whole community.

This leaflet explains what tools and opportunities are available in Wiltshire to help you protect or transform assets that are of value to your community, and what you have to do to get started. It tells you who you need to contact in Wiltshire Council, and what other sources of help and advice are available.

- Community Area Managers can be contacted about area board grants which might be used to support community ownership of assets: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council/areaboardsareaboardscommunitygrantscheme.htm>
 - Community First offers practical help, support and grants for setting up things like community owned village shops or other rural facilities such as village halls and pubs. Contact Tim Coomer on [01380 732812](http://www.communityfirst.org.uk) or see: <http://www.communityfirst.org.uk/index.php/localenterprise/store-is-the-core>
 - Wiltshire Community Land Trust offers advice and practical support on how to establish local community land trusts to own, develop and manage assets. Contact Rose Seagrief on [01380 850916](http://www.wiltshirect.org.uk) or rose@wiltshirect.org.uk
- A wide range of support is also available nationally:**
- Locality's My Community Rights website provides advice and details of government grants: www.mycommunityrights.org.uk
 - Community Matters offer advice on running community centres: www.communitymatters.org.uk
 - Community Shares can be an effective way of raising money in the community to take on an asset: <http://www.communityshares.org.uk/>
 - The Plunkett Foundation offer advice and support for establishing cooperative shops and pubs www.plunkett.co.uk
 - Awards for All offer small scale grants: <http://www.awardsforall.org.uk>

What assets are important to your community?

You may already have in mind the assets that you would like to see preserved for future community use – these could include the last pub or shop in the village, a community meeting space, or other facilities currently owned by Wiltshire Council or another public body. As well as your local knowledge, there are a number of other sources of information which your local community may already have on valued local assets. This can include any parish plan or any emerging neighbourhood (spatial) plan.

You may like to ask yourself the following questions:

1. What land and/or buildings in your community really matter to your community? Why?
 - Their current service use: for example a community hall, a park, the last pub in the village
 - Their potential use: for example a strategically placed derelict site or building which could become a community hub.
2. Who owns it now?
3. If the building is currently empty, and perhaps has not been used for a while, what is the reason?
4. Do you see ways the asset could be better used for community benefit under existing ownership?
5. If the asset is publicly or privately owned and were to come up for sale, is community ownership viable? For what use? On what terms (e.g. discounted sale or long lease)?

Having considered these questions, you can decide what action to take, based on the tools described in the middle of this leaflet.

Where can you get help?

Wiltshire Council provides dedicated support in the form of Community Area Managers (CAMs) who can advise you on the tools you could use to save valued assets for local people. They can be contacted via the council switchboard or email: firstname.lastname@wiltshire.gov.uk

Community area

Amesbury
Bradford on Avon
Calne
Chippenham
Corsham
Devizes
Malmesbury
Marlborough
Melksham
Pewsey
Royal Wootton Bassett & Cricklade
Salisbury
Southern Wiltshire
South West Wiltshire
Tidworth
Trowbridge
Warminster
Westbury

Community Area Manager

Karen Linaker
Peter Dunford
Jane Vaughan
Vicky Welsh
Dave Roberts
Richard Rogers
Miranda Gilmour
Andrew Jack
Alison Sullivan
Caroline Brailey
Penny Bell
Marianna Dodd
Tom Bray
Stephen Harris
Mary Cullen
Rachel Efermey
Jacqui Abbott
Sally Hendry

It may also be useful to start a discussion involving public bodies with an interest in the area, local voluntary and community groups, local businesses and other private landowners. This could involve forums such as the shadow Community Operation Boards (COBs) set up to deliver new campuses, community area partnerships, and the parish and town councils. Your community area manager could help you with this.

Is it an asset valued by the local community which enhances social wellbeing?

If it is, then consider nominating it as an **Asset of Community Value (ACV)**.

This new right means communities can ask Wiltshire Council to list certain assets as being of value to the community. If an asset is listed and then comes up for sale, the right gives communities that want it six months to put together a bid to buy it. This gives communities an increased chance to save much loved shops, pubs or other local facilities. Parish councils or local community groups can nominate both privately and publicly owned assets which meet the definition of being an Asset of Community Value.

Is it an empty shop which you would like to make temporary use of?

If it is, then consider **Meanwhile Use**.

Many town centres and high streets have empty shops which present a challenge to the vibrancy of the high street. This can be addressed by public and private owners agreeing to allow temporary or 'Meanwhile Use' of their property on terms that ensure they can get it back if a conventional tenancy becomes available. Pop-up shops are an associated concept - short-term sales spaces in temporary locations which 'pop-up' one day and disappear afterwards. Small and temporary pop-up shops can build up significant interest and customer exposure in a short space of time. They provide the opportunity to trial new business ideas or concepts without the risk of setting up a traditional business.

Is it an asset that the private owner doesn't want to sell, of which you could make better use?

If yes, then consider approaching the council about a **Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)**.

If community groups or other individuals want to bring a privately owned local asset back into use, for example turning a derelict site into a park, and the owner is reluctant to sell, then they are able to contact Wiltshire Council and ask them to use a Compulsory Purchase Order to buy the asset on their behalf.

A compelling case in the public interest must be demonstrated and the proposals must be sanctioned by the relevant central government minister. It is a lengthy and complex process ensuring that the rights of property owners are not extinguished without careful examination. It is necessary to show that there are no planning obstacles to the development, for example, by obtaining a planning permission or by reference to inclusion in a Neighbourhood Plan.

Is it owned by Wiltshire Council?

If it is, then consider asking for a **Community Asset Transfer (CAT)**.

Wiltshire Council recognises that many community groups occupy land or buildings that are owned by the council and wish to take over their ownership or management. They may wish to take over other buildings owned by the council within their community. Wiltshire Council has agreed a policy so that it can transfer the management and/or ownership of the asset to the community and may do so in some instances, at less than market value, if sufficient benefits can be delivered by the proposal. This process also applies if parish councils or community groups want to take on and maintain local facilities such as parks and play areas.

Is it currently being used for a service funded by Wiltshire Council?

If it is, then consider requesting service delegation, or consider the **Community Right to Challenge**.

Wiltshire Council recognises that parish or town councils and community groups may wish to run services that are currently delivered by the council locally – this could include things like maintaining allotments, play areas, public conveniences and parks. Wiltshire Council has agreed a policy on Delegation of Services which means that the council can fund these with or without the transfer of an asset.

Alternatively, the Community Right to Challenge could be used to express an interest in running a service; which if accepted would trigger a procurement exercise in which the interested parish could participate.

Is it owned by another public body, and is either unused or underused?

If yes, then consider the **Community Right to Reclaim Land**.

This right is aimed at helping local people ensure that public bodies do not needlessly retain under-used land or property, and is designed to get these sites back into productive use. The first step is to check the ownership of the land, which can be done through the Land Registry. A member of the public can then submit a request to the relevant Secretary of State to order disposal of the land. The Secretary of State has to consider that there are no restrictions on the use of the land and that the current owner has no suitable plans in place for the land either now or in the foreseeable future. If this is the case, they can direct the current owner to dispose of the land.

Is it land that you want to use for a community-led development?

If yes, then consider the **Community Right to Build** (or neighbourhood development orders).

The community right to build allows communities to create the buildings they want to see without going through the normal planning application process. Communities will be able to build, for example, homes to sell on the open market, affordable housing for rent, and sheltered housing for elderly local residents, low-cost starter homes and facilities such as new playgrounds. The benefits of these developments, such as profits, can be managed by a community organisation for the community. The process is similar to that for the creation of Neighbourhood Plans but instead of creating a policy document the use of this right grants planning permission directly if there is majority support by the local community in a referendum.