

Annual Report 2016/2017

November 2017

UKCN is actively involved in the advocacy of cohousing principles and the development of sustainable local and national infrastructure to help groups to develop their cohousing vision. This report illustrates some of the ways we, along with our members are making progress.

An overview of actions and success in 2016/17



Knowledge and interest in cohousing continues to grow, with the profile being raised through significant media coverage in particular of the Older Women's Cohousing (OWCH) project New Ground, winning a total of 7 National Design Awards. You can see their brilliant video here:

<https://cohousing.org.uk/information/videos/#senior-cohousing>

Three further cohousing projects are now on site, and are due for completion next year, each contributing to the increased profile through proactive local and national media engagement.

Greater awareness of cohousing is beginning to be translated onto the policy platform with the Minister for Housing & Planning due to open our annual conference on 27th November, being held jointly with the National Community Land Trust Network. We have also been asked to attend the oral evidence session of the CLG housing for older people inquiry, following our submission of written evidence in March.

Below is an overview of our achievements in 2016/2017:

- Membership of UKCN has continued to increase with there now being 139 members. There are 55 group members (13 established; 42 developing/forming). There are 78 individual members and 6 associate members (including 2 accredited consultants and 1 accredited developer).
- A number of cohousing groups are moving closer to living in their new communities: Cannock Mill Cohousing in Colchester are on site and due to move in next October. Their project will create 23 new homes and common facilities in the refurbished old mill. They secured the government Home Builder Fund for their build loan;



K1 Cohousing in Cambridge are on site and due to move in next June, their project will create 42 new homes ranging in size from 1 bedroom apartments to 4 bedroom houses in a design that promotes sustainable living and community cohesion;





On the Brink Cohousing community in Sheffield's building work to the the old Victorian Brincliffe House is well under way, using skilled crafts people to create their refurbished cohousing vision;



Bridport Cohousing CLT in Dorset has a large site with planning consent for two phases, one for 34 new homes and one for 28 new homes both with a range of property types from 1 bed apartments to 4 bed family homes and 50% of these for affordable rent.



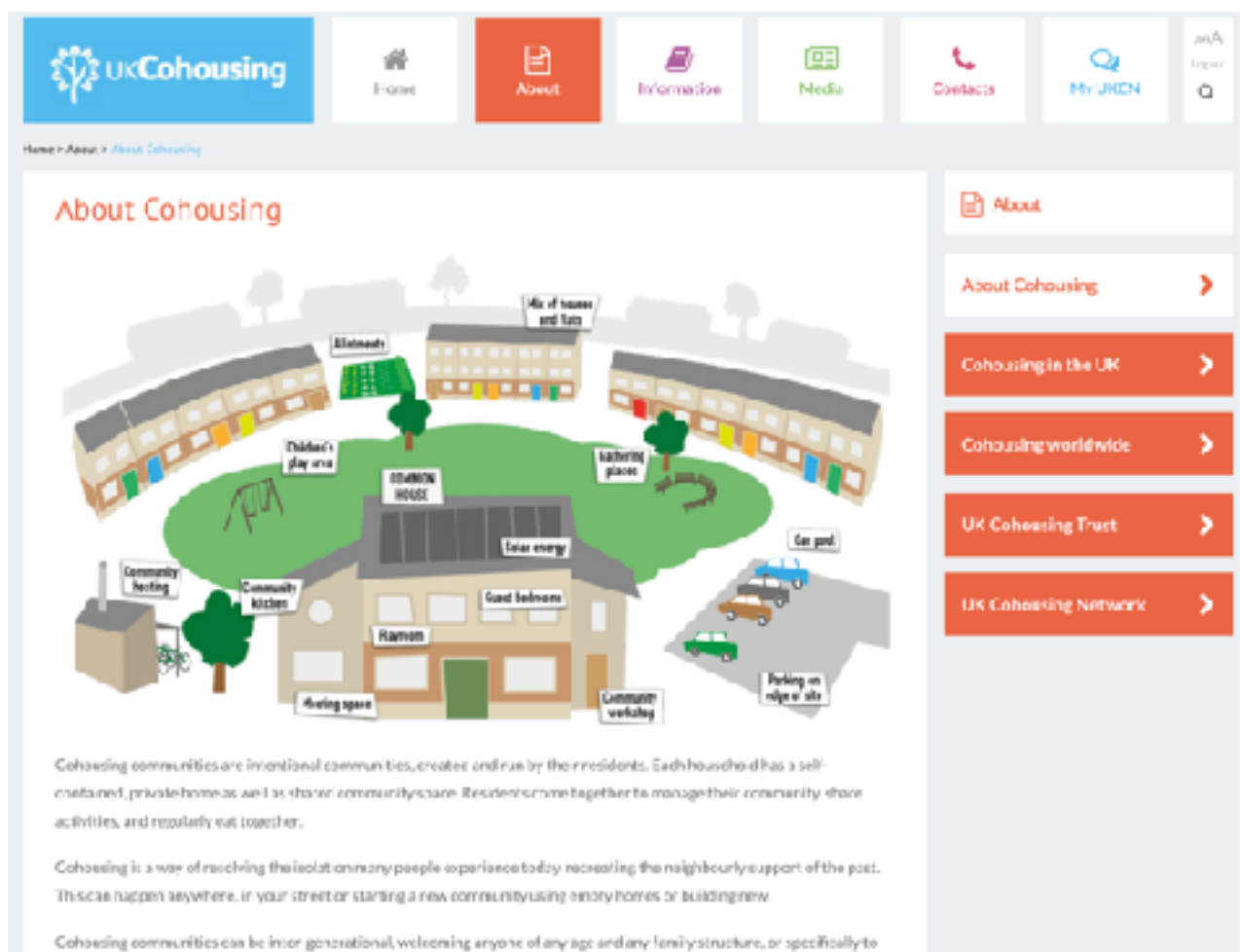
Chapletown Cohousing (ChaCo) in Leeds has got its planning consent to build sustainable and affordable homes for 33 households with shared facilities, gardens and play space on derelict land in the ownership of Leeds City Council. ChaCo has been funded so far with a £360,000 government grant and £650,000 in short-term loans from investors. The scheme is likely to complete in 2019. ChaCo is a diverse intentional community grown from the local area, with at least two-thirds of the residents being from Chapletown, with the group keen to make sure that the group reflects the diversity of the local area in terms of age, ethnicity and wealth.



YorSpace has submitted an outline planning application to create 19 low cost, cooperatively owned, environmentally sustainable, community focussed homes at Lowfield Green in Acomb. The 'set aside' site for cohousing is part of an old city school site, where a total of 140 homes will be built. The planning application should be decided early in 2018, and if approval is given building could start by the summer with the first homes completed a year later.



- In April we launched the new UK Cohousing website, thanks to the investment from the Big Lottery Accelerating Ideas Fund. The website has a lot of new features, including a members area called MY UKCN, where members can connect with each other, discuss topics in a forum, see what cohousing properties are currently available, share useful cohousing resources, get information on consultants and developers and even start to form new cohousing groups. We also try to pick up on all the media coverage, highlight the great video's produced by groups and share the event information across the UK. <https://cohousing.org.uk>



- The Network continues to be the go to place for anyone looking to find out about cohousing in the UK. The website attracts over 3,000 visits a month, with most of the visits being to use the UK Cohousing Directory and generates a regular stream of enquiries. Both our Facebook page with over 1,700 likes and 3,200 Twitter followers, continue to attract interest and discussion on current issues and news stories.

- From April 2017, UKCN became wholly reliant on its membership fees for its core income to operate. UKCN has continued to develop our joint working with the National CLT Network, and following a successful initial period, UKCN has entered into a 12 month service level agreement for the provision of 1.5 days per week administrative and communications support. This enables us to respond to the numerous queries from members and the public to the office@cohousing.org.uk email account, keep our financial accounts in order, manage our website and social media. This joint working has seen additional benefits such as our joint lobbying on the Community Housing Fund and the leasehold reform proposals, and significantly our 'sell-out' joint community led housing conference.
- In order to continue to support the growth of cohousing in the UK, we have been working with other community led housing organisations such as the Confederation of Co-operative Housing, CDS Co-operatives and Locality supported by funders the Power to Change and Nationwide Foundation to plan and enable a structured support system of advice, information and tools available nationally and locally via community housing hubs, to make the routes to cohousing much easier, with less personal risk and therefore more accessible to more people and give more confidence to investors/lenders. In July 2017, the mayor of London launched the Homes for Londoner's community housing hub, that we had been instrumental in campaigning for and shaping, thanks to the impact of OWCH. We have put a lot of work into campaigning for the Community Housing Fund to provide accessible funding for groups to help buy sites and buildings, pay for planning costs, and enable more affordable homes to be created through capital grants.



The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has today set out plans for a £250,000 boost to set up the first-ever one-stop shop to help Londoners build their own genuinely affordable homes in the capital.

The Homes for Londoners Community Housing Hub will offer support to Londoners and community groups who want to build homes in the capital themselves. From this summer, the hub will offer advice including how to access funding and unlock land, as well as offering technical support for projects and a base for information sharing.

- We are very conscious that the majority of the recent policy work has been England focused. This is in part because of the limited resources of UKCN and because of the opportunity of the Community Housing Fund announced in the Spring budget 2015. Whilst there has been some support to a group and policy work in Wales, and some engagement with groups Scotland and Northern Ireland, this needs to be far greater in future and to widen from just the focus on senior cohousing where it has featured in key government strategies. We hope that all the work we have put into raising the profile of cohousing and the success of the policy work in England can be used to positively pursue and demonstrate the benefits of all cohousing forms to the governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as we move forward with the UK Cohousing Network's potential.



- In February the Network agreed to formally separate from the UK Cohousing Trust, as required by the Charity Commission. The application for charitable registration of the Trust is now moving forward to create a new charity to provide research and education on the social and environmental impact of community housing and housing design.



Trelay Cohousing celebrating their successful award of £12,000 from Marks and Spencer Community Energy Fund for its Sunshine Batteries project