

Government policy on community asset transfer

Charles Woodd
Community Resource Division

What is asset transfer?

- The transfer of land or buildings from a local authority (or other public body) to a third sector organisation...
- usually at a discounted price...
- 'off' the market eg to allow time for transfer to be implemented successfully...
- on a spectrum of tenure from a management agreement to freehold transfer

What's in it for Government?

- “increase the number of people engaged in in the running and ownership of local services and assets” *Communities in control: real people, real power*
- “the overriding goal is community empowerment” *Quirk Review of Community Management and Ownership of Public Assets*
- A vital part of commitment to a thriving third sector through “Community buildings, accessible to the whole community” *Third Sector Review*

What's in it for local authorities?

- Increase in feelings of influence locally (NI4)
- More effective use of assets – better vfm
- More targeted services
- Improved environment for a thriving third sector (NI7)
- Attracting additional resources to the area
- Improved cohesion and sense of belonging (NI1 and NI2)

What's in it for communities?

- Preserving iconic buildings and local facilities
- Generating independent income to support community activity
- Creating jobs and wealth locally
- Developing strong, stable independent community anchor organisations which can deliver on health & social care, arts, sports, employment, and support smaller local groups to thrive

What's the choice?

When considering surplus or underused assets, local authorities have a choice:

Either dispose commercially and use the money to pay for other services

Or transfer the asset in order to realise social benefits in terms of services provided, savings generated, other priorities advanced

(see later session on measuring value)

What help is available? (1)

- Tailored support for local authority-community sector partnerships (*Advancing Assets programme*):
 - 72 local authority areas so far
 - 30 to be selected for 2010/11
- Information, advice and referral (*Asset Transfer Unit*)
- Guidance:
 - RICS guidance leaflets on LA asset management and asset transfer
 - *Managing risks in asset transfer: a guide supported by Communities and Local Government*

What help is available? (2)

- Expert support from national networks:
 - Development Trusts Association
 - Community Matters
 - ACRE
 - Architectural Heritage Fund
 - and others

*supported by the Office of the Third Sector
and others*

What help is available? (3)

Funding:

- Community Assets Programme – offered capital grants to refurbish, renovate and transfer ownership of community buildings from local authority to third sector – 2 buildings already open for business under this fund.

www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

supported by OTS

What help is available? (4)

Funding:

- Communitybuilders – revenue grants for business development support and loans and grants for capital investment for community anchor organisations

www.communitybuildersfund.org.uk

supported by CLG and OTS

What else are we doing?

- Exploring new sources of investment eg Withdrawable Community Shares
- Promoting greater collaboration at LSP level eg through Total Assets
- Supporting examples of 'meanwhile uses' for empty buildings and land
- Facilitating shared learning through ATU and partners

Contacts

Communities and Local Government

Charles Woodd

Community Resource Division

charles.woodd@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Office of the Third Sector

Neil Smith

Community Action & Campaigning Team

neil.smith@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk