

CREATING AFFORDABLE HOMES AND COMMUNITY SPACES

by Dwynwen Stepien

Emsworth Community Land Trust (ECLT), formed early in 2018, is a vibrant, forward-looking organisation that aims to help improve our town by encouraging the provision of affordable homes and community spaces for local people. Initial focus was on the Emsworth Victoria Cottage Hospital site at the crossroads in the town, but several other locations are also being investigated.

By the time you read this, the favoured site for the Emsworth Medical Practice should be decided and we hope that the Doctors will be moving into what was the Victoria Cottage Hospital. However, if this has not happened then the committee of Emsworth Community Land Trust (ECLT) will continue their work to ensure that this site and perhaps the buildings upon it remain for the benefit of the whole community.

Chair of ECLT Dwynwen Stepien says: 'We have been in talks with possible partners to help move our plans forward. We aim to work with a housing association so that affordable homes can be built. We are also investigating a number of possibilities such as encouraging a community bank branch in Emsworth and surveying facilities for young people as well as being keen to help encourage health and well-being provision.'

The ECLT will be running a housing and community needs survey in the new year to help identify exactly what the needs are for affordable homes and community services. This could include looking into public transport provision to see if any gaps can be filled cost-effectively.

Harry Thuillier, Treasurer of ECLT, comments: 'The provision of affordable homes is a huge challenge particularly in places like Emsworth where new houses may be built then used as second homes.

This does not help the community to flourish and can mean the further reduction of shops and services in the town. We have a lot of carers working in homes for older people in Emsworth, as well as teachers, nurses and other key workers and I believe that most of these cannot afford to live locally.



The Cottage Hospital, Emsworth

We want to change this so that these people can afford to live in Emsworth, and I believe this will benefit all of us. Problems like these must be tackled if the Emsworth we love is to survive and we at the ECLT will try our best to meet some of these challenges.'

An ambitious outlook? Certainly. But the group of local residents who lead the ECLT are encouraged that more than 300 people in Emsworth have expressed support for the aims of the group and become members/shareholders. If you would like to join too, please look at the membership section of our website www.emsworthclt.org.uk

A meeting, open to all, will be on Thursday February 21st at Emsworth Community Centre with an afternoon and evening session. Please do join us! We look forward to discussing our plans with you. All are welcome. If you have some skills/enthusiasm on such matters as community health, affordable housing, legal contracts or fundraising, please contact us. Email us on info@emsworthclt.org.uk or ring to speak with Maggie on 01243 699517.

In the meantime, those on the ECLT committee wish everyone a very Happy Christmas. If you want to make a meaningful New Year resolution, why not become a member of Emsworth Community Land Trust, or better still do that and phone and offer us your help as a volunteer? Happy New Year to all! Hope to see you on Feb 21st.