



Montserrat

Exploring Community Access to Farms and Land

Clynfyw Care Farm Case Study

Resilient Green Spaces

Clynfyw Care Farm – Acquiring land through community shares

For those seeking to acquire land for a community focussed farm and have long term security over use of the land, purchasing land via community shares is one option. One such example of a farm going through this process is Clynfyw Care Farm.

Clynfyw Care Farm is a Community Interest company that cares for adults with learning difficulties, those recovering from mental health difficulties, domestic abuse survivors, veterans struggling with life after the forces and others. The care farm uses around 12 acres of a 395-acre organic farm, Clynfyw Farm, in Abercych, north Pembrokeshire.

What have they achieved?

The farm has been providing accessible accommodation since the mid 1980s and Pembrokeshire County Council used cottages on the farm for respite stays for disability support workers from 2009 until 2020. In 2011 the CIC was established to run day care services, supported tenancies and related activities on the farm. They currently support over 100 vulnerable people and have a staff and volunteer team of around 50. They run a variety of rural enterprises including community apple-juicing, charcoal production, free range ex-battery chickens, vermicomposting as well as [ASDAN](#) accredited independent living training, and salvaging and repairing wheelchairs and mobility aids which are then rehoused in sub-Saharan Africa.

Clynfyw Farm has been farmed by the same family since the 1750s and is currently owned by Tom Lewis-Bowen and leased to Jim Lewis-Bowen, who manages the Care Farm. Following much discussion about the long-term future of the farm and security for its enterprises, in 2021 a Community Benefit Society (CBS) was established to purchase the farm through the issue of community shares.

What are their aims with the share offer?

The aim of the CBS and the share offers is to enable the farm to become community owned and ensure long term security for the Care Farm, whilst building community resilience through regenerative food production for the local community. Jim sees these as highly interconnected: the climate and ecological crises threaten the stability of our society and when societies become unstable it is the vulnerable that suffer most.

Community shares enable people to invest in a community project and, as with standard company shares, become part owners of an organisation and its assets. Through purchasing shares they become members of the CBS and unlike standard shares, each community share owner has equal voting rights, regardless of how much they have invested (one member one vote rather than one share one vote).

Only Cooperatives and CBSs can issue community shares. Whilst the former must be run for the benefit of its members, the latter must be run for the benefit of the community. This does not prevent them paying interest on shares, but it does limit the level of financial benefit to shareholders. Therefore, selling the vision of what the organisation aims to do is crucial for attracting investment.

Clynfyw CBS aims to pay out 4% to its community shareholders, funds for which will come from the rent paid for supported tenancies. Fortunately, it has also built up years of community engagement and support and already secured over £100k in pledges from the local community.

They hope that this will be the first of a series of share offers over the years ahead. They will use their experience of the first share offer and see how the CBS evolves, which will inform future offers. Through this, they hope to give more opportunities for other people to have access to land and small scale growing and other community-based resilience building ventures.

Who was involved?

Jim Lewis-Bowen has been the driving force behind the Care Farm and in seeking to secure its long-term future via the share offer. Sarah Hughes has led on the majority of the work needed to get the share offer off the ground including writing the vast majority of the documentation, coordinating the meetings, and developing the pathway and promotion of the share offer. External support has been provided by Cwmpas and Havards of Newport, Pembrokeshire.

What challenges have they faced?

A key challenge is that the team is already very overstretched. With so many projects on the go already, and such high demand for their care farm services, the additional work required for running the Community Share Offer has not been easy to do.

They also received conflicting information from their initial choice of share sales platform, which contributed to delays in starting the share offer. They had hoped to have the share offer open in 2022, but as of July 2023 are still working on it.

How have they attempt to tackle these challenges?

Through collaboration and partnership working, in particular building on existing local and national support. Cwmpas (formerly the Wales Coop Centre), provided support and guidance on the process of registering a CBS and preparing for the community share offer.

They have also collaborated with other community organisations. For example, after many delays getting their share offer onto the platform, they are now working with Havards a community owned shop in Newport, Pembrokeshire and using their software. This is part of a much more localised plan which we hope will help establish a Welsh based pathway other local groups can more easily follow.

What worked well?

Having built strong relationships with the broader community over several years mean that there was already a large group of people will to pledge their support.

Any lessons for other groups?

Developing a Community Share Offer takes a significant amount of time and effort. It is therefore not a good option where a quick sale is required. It works best in situations where there is an existing relationship with the owner and they are prepared to be patient while the CBS is set up and share issue campaign developed. In addition, having an established community that is already supportive of what you are doing or planning to do makes a big difference when it comes to selling shares.

You can learn more about Clynfwy Care Farm & their share offer by visiting clynfwy.co.uk.



Image Credit - Clynfwy Care Farm

Resilient Green Spaces is a £1.27m partnership project led by Social Farms & Gardens to pilot alternative re-localised food systems using communities and their green spaces as the driving force for change across Wales until June 2023.

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