

PRESS RELEASE

Strictly embargoed until 4pm, Tuesday 15 May 2007



DTA welcomes the Quirk report on asset transfer to communities

The Quirk review launched its report on asset transfer to communities today at the Burton Street Project, a Sheffield based development trust and member of the Development Trusts Association (DTA). The report has been welcomed by the DTA as a positive step forwards in removing some of the barriers to the transfer of assets into community ownership.

The report by Barry Quirk, Chief Executive of Lewisham Council, was commissioned by government to investigate barriers to the transfer of land and buildings from local authorities and other public sector agencies to the community sector, and where barriers exist how best to overcome them.

The report states: *'there are no substantive impediments to the transfer of public assets to communities. It can be done, indeed it has been done legitimately and successfully in very many places.'*

The report goes on to say *'There are risks but they can be minimised and managed – there is plenty of experience to draw on. The secret is all parties working together.'*

Steve Wyler, Director of the DTA, commented, *'At a stroke the Quirk review has demolished the excuses of do-nothing bureaucrats who have pretended for years that they don't have the powers or that risks are too high or that community asset ownership is not in the public interest.'*

'At the same time the report gives hope to those in town halls everywhere with a can-do attitude. To place land and buildings in community hands is to provide the means for people to create

profound and long term transformation in their neighbourhood. This is what community empowerment is really about. If anyone still doubts this they only have to look at our development trust members - we have £350m of assets in community ownership, driving change from the bottom up.'

The report calls for an ambitious programme of guidance and promotional activities to raise awareness and change culture, and encourage a more corporate approach by public sector agencies to their asset portfolio in every area, in order to balance different public interests.

An English version of the 'community right to buy' legislation that exist in Scotland is not recommended at this stage, but the report acknowledges that 'this might need to be revisited in the future in the light of experience'. Similarly the review avoids a recommendation on the level of finance required, although it quotes the DTA's estimate that an investment of £150m would lead to an additional accumulation of £500m of assets in community ownership in the next few years.

'This leaves two big challenges for government,' says Steve Wyler, 'Will England fall further behind Scotland in terms of an enabling framework, and will the fine words and the recent good news of the £30m community assets fund be matched by longer term investment from the Spending Review due in the Autumn? If government responds positively in these respects we believe the community sector and local government will be able to rise to the challenge and this landmark report will be the start of a new era of community led renewal.'

- ENDS -

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Notes to editors:

Quirk Review of community ownership and management of public assets:

The review was announced in September 2007 at the DTA conference by Ruth Kelly, in response to a DTA challenge to government for greater support for community asset transfer.

“Making Assets work: The Quirk Review of community ownership and management of public assets” will be published by the Department for Communities and Local Government on 15 May 2007.

For case studies, examples, and snapshots of community asset based development please visit the DTA website at www.dta.org.uk.

Development Trusts Association background information:

The DTA helps people set up development trusts. These are community organisations using self-help, enterprise, and asset ownership, to find local solutions and transform their community for good. The DTA also helps trusts to learn from each other and to work effectively, and influences government and others at national and local level, to build support and investment for the movement.

The DTA is the leading network of community enterprise practitioners, and is aiming for a successful development trust in every community. There are now over 400 development trusts in DTA membership, in both urban and rural areas. While many are still small, others are operating at scale: the combined turnover is £200m and development trusts have £350m of assets in community ownership.

DTA is a member of the Community Alliance with *bassac* and Community Matters.