

Why a Development Trust?

'Communities are creating their own organisations to help reverse the trend of social and economic decline'

In the last twenty years, many communities and neighbourhoods across the UK have faced increasing difficulties. Both jobs and services have gone from disadvantaged communities. In urban communities homes are abandoned, in rural communities no affordable homes are available. The loss of skills caused by the unemployment which, in some neighbourhoods, has tainted two generations, has left those communities less and less able to take advantage of the chances that do come along.

Until now, government has found it hard to stem this decline. Two decades of regeneration programmes have left behind only very limited long-term improvements. The gap between our richest and poorest neighbourhoods has widened dramatically. Economic decline has brought low morale and an increased sense of exclusion. The top-down road to change has made little impression.

More and more communities are now creating their own organisations - development trusts - to help reverse the trend of social and economic decline.

Development trusts provide the vehicle for communities to get active, to build their skills, to deliver practical change and to recover their belief in themselves and each other. Development trusts help foster a new spirit of enterprise, which is helping to create wealth in communities. They have enabled many communities to relaunch themselves on a path to sustainable growth.

Active communities and community enterprise are the essential building blocks for sustainable long-term change. The idea of community enterprise is now firmly on the map.

Based on the experience of its members the DTA believes that development trusts are successful for 2 reasons above all:

- Regeneration can only really work if the people who are most affected, local residents, are given the opportunity themselves to steer the transformation of their community.
- A community-led enterprise culture fosters self-help and reduces dependency and therefore is the basis for confident, thriving and active communities.