

PRESS RELEASE

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Last chance to bring affordable homes to Arkengarthdale



The Upper Dales Community Land Trust (UDCLT), a not-for-profit organisation, is striving to breathe new life into the former Arkengarthdale School by creating much-needed affordable homes to help sustain the local community. Having exhausted all other potential sites in the Dale, which have revealed funding shortfalls preventing the schemes from progressing, the School is the only remaining development site which fulfils the urgent affordable housing requirements to encourage young people to remain in the Dale.

The proposal will create high-quality and energy efficient homes for local people. Repurposing the existing School site will support the long-term sustainability of the Dale, whilst preserving the heritage and aesthetics of this much-loved building which has been the hub of the community for many generations.

Arkengarthdale Parish Council and the UDCLT have long recognised the importance of helping young people to stay in the Dale and have regularly supported planning applications to help future proof the community. There is no social housing in Arkengarthdale and despite several housing surveys, showing a strong demand

for affordable homes, nothing has been forthcoming. This is a once-in-lifetime opportunity to provide affordable housing in Arkengarthdale. If the offer is not accepted then the need is unlikely to ever be fulfilled which may threaten the fabric of the Dale.

Stephen Stubbs, who was born in the Dale, and is chairman of Arkengarthdale Parish Council and Vice Chairman of the UDCLT, said: "It was a very sad day when the School was forced to close, having been a focal point of the community for 360 years. What better way to preserve its integrity with a sympathetic development that will revitalise this pivotal building and continue its legacy. This development is being aimed primarily at young people to encourage them to bring up their families in the Dale and so keep the future bright for our deeply-rural community - for a Dale without the presence of young families has no future at all. I urge all members of the Swaledale with Arkengarthdale Parochial Church Council to let their voice be heard and support our offer."

Arkengarthdale is a very special place and the Trust believes the community has a responsibility to give something back to help sustain its future. Their proposal not only creates affordable housing but also keeps an important part of the Dale's history relevant to life today.

The school building was purchased by Arkengarthdale Parochial Church Council (APCC) in 1933. The parishioners of Arkengarthdale funded the purchase with the belief of a better future for the next generation. The APCC no longer exists and the school building legally belongs to the Swaledale with Arkengarthdale Parochial Church Council, which consists of four churches. The principle of what the UDCLT is trying to deliver has close links with the PCC's charitable aims.

John Watkins, Chairman of the UDCLT, concluded: "We hope the PCC will take an altruistic approach to our offer which is closely aligned with their charitable objectives, promoting the mission of the Church in the widest sense. Over the years, many Christian initiatives have focussed on addressing issues such as homelessness. We believe this scheme will enable us to honour the intent of the original parishioners, back in 1933, who sought a better future for the Dale and give the building back its long-held purpose in supporting the welfare of the Dales people, serving at the heart of our community and offering a lasting and positive impact on the future sustainability of Arkengarthdale."

UDCLT has four directors, John Watkins (Chairman), Stephen Stubbs (Vice Chairman), Abbie Rhodes (Manager of Upper Dales Community Partnership) and County Councillor Yvonne Peacock. If the offer is accepted the development will generate construction work within the local economy, providing employment to local tradesmen.

For further information on the UDCLT's affordable housing scheme in Arkengarthdale please contact: e: udcltrust@gmail.com

Image 1: (from left to right) Photograph of UDCLT Directors Stephen Stubbs (Vice Chairman), John Watkins (Chairman) and County Councillor Yvonne Peacock outside the disused Arkengarthdale School, the only remaining site in Arkengarthdale for potential development into affordable homes.