



Community Right to Buy

Party Council Campaign Briefing

The law in England is changing as a result of a long-running Co-operative Party campaign, but there's more work to be done to bring it to life in our communities.

The introduction of a '**Community Right to Buy**' will be transformational for communities across England, allowing more of us to own the things that really matter to where we live.

But we need your help to ensure that this new right is exercised so that we see power and wealth shared amongst all of us. **The next step in our campaign will show communities the power our co-operative politics has to change the country.**

This briefing explains what the Labour government is delivering on community ownership, and **how you can use it to campaign locally.**

Background

Community Right to Buy is a key Co-operative Party policy that we successfully campaigned for inclusion in the Labour manifesto for the 2024 General Election. It's a policy our movement has been campaigning on for more than a decade.

The Co-operative Party has been hard at work securing this change to the law because we know it will be transformative for communities across England. As part of the Labour government's landmark English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, Community Right to Buy will give people the power to shape where they live.



The policy

Why is community ownership important?

At the Co-operative Party, **we know that ownership matters**. Those who own the things that sustain our communities ultimately get to make the decisions about our communities' futures.

Community ownership flips the script on the reality seen across the country, of absentee landlords who aren't invested in the community's future. With ownership in the hands of the community, **local people get to decide the path their community takes and the direction that they head in together**.

What is Community Right to Buy?

Community Right to Buy will give communities the right of first refusal to buy eligible local assets when they come up for sale.

This new right will replace the widely considered failed "Community Right to Bid" regime, which saw only 2% of eligible assets end up in community ownership. To be eligible, assets must be listed with the local authority as an "Asset of Community Value" or under the new "Sporting Asset of Community Value" category.

The new right to buy doubles the time in which community groups have exclusivity to purchase these assets from 6 months to 12 months. These changes will give community groups a better chance of owning local assets by giving them twice as long to raise the funds needed and through expanding the range of assets that are afforded protection.

What is an Asset of Community Value?

The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill **expands and strengthens existing definitions of Assets of Community Value (ACV)**, to cover not just the social wellbeing or interests of a community but now also its economic wellbeing or interests.

It also removes the requirement that the asset had community value in the recent past, allowing assets to be listed that have had community value at any time in the past.

What is a Sporting Asset of Community Value?

Although it is currently possible to list a sports ground as an ACV, the take-up has been concerningly low, with **not even 100 of the over 6,000 sports grounds in England being listed as an ACV**. This staggering lack of listing has continued to see sports grounds flogged to the highest bidder on the open market, leaving communities vulnerable to losing their sporting assets.

The change in the law to introduce the sporting asset of community value (SACV) category. This will mean that all eligible **sports grounds will be automatically designated as SACV and will retain this designation indefinitely**.



This listing will also cover other facilities that the grounds depend on to function, such as car parks and training facilities.

This broader coverage will mean that **the functioning of a sports ground can no longer be undermined by the calculated stripping away of its supporting assets.**

The politics

By giving local people stronger rights to step in and buy valued community spaces, **we can keep more assets owned by and rooted in our communities. It's a model we know works** – there are already thriving community-owned assets of all kinds, from pubs to sports clubs. But for these to exist, **communities have had to succeed despite the system, not because of it.** Labour, with the Co-operative Party is changing that - **putting power, ownership and opportunity back into the hands of local people.**

When you look at the sheer number of important local assets that have been lost from our communities during the almost decade and a half of Tory governments, the numbers speak for themselves. **An estimated 6,000 council-owned assets a year were closed or sold off, with only 165 each year ending up in community hands,** this included community centres and libraries. Similarly, thousands of pubs, bank branches and shops have been lost.

Each was an important thread in the social fabric of a community, leaving each of us socially, economically and culturally poorer.

If we want to see our politics of bringing people together by sharing power and wealth to build more cohesive and resilient communities, we must stop this rapid loss of community assets. This is why Community Right to Buy is so important.

What does Community Right to Buy mean for your community?

In the co-operative movement, we have always believed that by putting power in the hands of our communities, **we can turn the page on a Britain in decline and write a new chapter of a country in which communities shape their own futures.**

By owning more of the things that matter to us all in the places we live, **we all have a say and have a stake in building a better-connected and more resilient country.**

Community Right to Buy will be a vital part of achieving the change our communities need to see.

But we need to make sure that local community groups know about these changes and their new rights to own more of what matters. We also need our Labour and Co-operative Councillors to make sure that their local authority is undertaking its responsibilities to make Community Right to Buy work.



Action for you to take

- **Reach out to local community groups and let them know about their new rights and support local efforts to list ACVs**
- **Hold a meeting on Community Right to Buy and its potential to be enacted locally**
- **Ask your CLP delegates to take a motion to local CLPs**
- **Write to your local Labour or Labour and Co-operative Council Leaders and Labour Group leaders in opposition**