



The Confederation of  
Co-operative  
Housing

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CCH Case Study: Safe Regeneration | Researcher: Philippa Hughes | Date: July 2020

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# Safe Regeneration Branching out into housing from other community projects



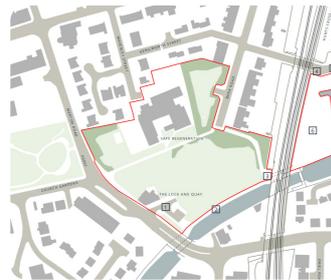


## At a glance

- **Safe Regeneration is a charity and company limited by guarantee that began 20 years ago as a community arts programme that used art to engage people in conversations about their local area**
- **Currently, Safe Regeneration runs the community programme from it's hub in an old school building which also provides space for local social enterprises, and a community pub called the Lock and Quay**
- **It is in the process of developing a vacant six-acre plot of land in Bootle alongside the canal by the old school and the community pub financed through a mix of grant from Homes England, Liverpool City Region and a bank loan**
- **The development will have 187 homes, including 80 extra care units, and 3,000 square foot of business space. The homes will be owned by Safe Community Homes, a separate community interest company**
- **Safe Regeneration is also the parent company of three subsidiaries; 123 Accommodation which acts as the developer, a community energy company, and Safe Assets which will own the community assets such as the community pub**



## Photos



## Overview

**Growing from a community arts project, Safe Regeneration has been a vehicle for developing a sense of community ownership in Bootle for the past 20 years.**

Over that time Safe Regeneration has grown into a place-based project that runs a variety of community programmes, including an annual music festival, and supports local social entrepreneurs, from it's base in a disused school. In the past five years it has been able to purchase the building, which acts as a community hub and space for 13 other social entrepreneur organisations, and a pub which sits beside the site. The pub is run as a community pub and a venue for creative activities, with all profits reinvested into community-based programmes. Safe Regeneration is now in the process of acting as developer for a vacant brownfield site along the canal in Bootle, adjacent to their building and pub.

## Overview (Continued)

The planned development will be a major regeneration project for the area, intended to not only provide housing and business units but also to open the canal waterfront as a destination for the wider community. Safe Regeneration has acquired the land and arranged the finance for the development and is currently awaiting a decision on planning permission in August 2020. The planned development consists of 187 units of housing, 3,000 square feet of business space and open public space along the canal. It is planned that the site will be over 80% self-sufficient in its energy use through its own solar and geothermal energy. Of the new homes, 80 will be extra care units for older people and the remaining will be a mix of family homes and flats. Most properties will be let at affordable rent, apart from 16 houses which will be shared ownership properties. The extra care units will be allocated wholly by the council and the remainder of the homes will be allocated 50% by the council and 50% by Safe Regeneration, who wants to encourage applications from residents who are keen to take part in the community life of the area through, for example, volunteering locally. Once developed, the properties will be wholly owned by Safe Community Homes who will contract a housing association to manage them.

The proposed development involves an investment of £40 million which Safe Regeneration has arranged through a mix of grant funding from Homes England, Liverpool City Region and borrowing from a bank. Safe Regeneration will act as a developer and use the profit from the project to sustain the organisation and provide community benefit for the long term. As the proposed development is on a long-term derelict site in an area of high need, Safe Regeneration found it straightforward to make a case to Homes England and Liverpool City Region that there has been market failure to provide homes and therefore there is a need for grant funding. The

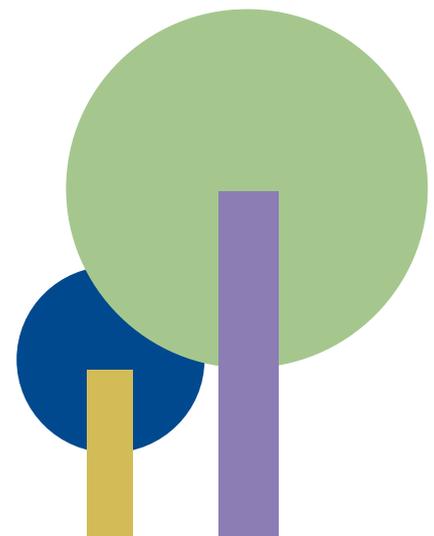
disused land previously belonged in part to the local council and in part to the Canal and Rivers Trust. Safe Regeneration has arranged a build lease with both parties meaning that it will pay for the land once the development has been completed. Safe Regeneration has decided to become a registered provider of social housing themselves, through a separate community interest company, Safe Community Homes, rather than partner with another organisation as it wanted to generate and keep its own profit from the homes.

Safe Regeneration operates a three-tier organisational structure of board, building members and local area members. The board consists of six trustees, four of whom are local and one representative from the building's tenants. It also has wider local membership referred to as its stakeholder base. When decisions are made, this stakeholder base is consulted and invited to meetings to discuss plans. In addition to these formal mechanisms, Safe Regeneration has found the community pub to be a good sounding board for community needs. The pub is a place where all types of people from the local area attend; and Safe Regeneration representatives can make announcements and get feedback from people gathered there. They also find that people in the local community come to the pub or the Safe Regeneration building to speak informally about issues.

These two avenues of consultation have been used to determine the priorities of the new development, in terms of the housing mix, provision of communal spaces and green space. For example, the decision to include a significant amount of extra care units was taken as a reflection of these conversations. Demonstrating this community support has been essential for the project as in the early stages of the process Sefton Council were unwilling to consider

selling Safe Regeneration the land. By making announcements and updating people informally at the pub, Safe Regeneration was able to treble its local stakeholder membership, providing a formal demonstration of support in the community for the development.

As well as undertaking this development, Safe Regeneration also hosts the newly formed Liverpool Community Led Housing Enabling Hub as part of its suite of activities. Community Led Housing Enabling Hubs are points of contact in a region for community groups to get advice and support with community led housing projects. The Hub aims to work towards making community led housing a mainstream option by supporting existing groups and stimulating interest in community led housing, leading to new groups and new projects. Liverpool based community led housing schemes have been focused on regenerating neighbourhoods and have built on the history of co-operative housing in the area and the Hub hopes to further this tradition. Safe Regeneration stepped forward to incubate the Hub, as it was important to them to see the service available in Liverpool and help to spread their learnings around delivering community projects that can sustain themselves financially.





## Quotes

“We’re probably at the other end from a developer, a developer wants to come in spend as little as they possibly can and get out as quickly. We want to spend as much as we possibly can and we’re not going anywhere.”

### **Brain Dawe**

Chief Executive Officer, Safe Regeneration

“What we want to do is have Community Led Housing as a key element of the housing strategy across the region that is seen as part of the solution in terms of delivering innovative, affordable, relevant housing for people that they have more control over.”

### **Paul Kelly**

Director, Liverpool City Region  
Community Led Housing Hub



## Learning points

- **Long term investment in a place and building up assets can put community organisations in a good position to undertake major schemes**
- **Physical meeting spaces such as the pub and the Safe Regeneration building create avenues for informal involvement for the community which can be extended to formal involvement**
- **A community organisation can seek to become financially sustainable through generating profit as a developer**

