

Jess Steele, Development Trusts Association



The Development Trusts Association is a dynamic UK-wide movement, bringing together over 450 community-led organisations, which use self-help, social enterprise, and community asset ownership to bring about long-term social, economic and environmental renewal to transform their communities for good. The DTA – in common with many of its members - generates over half its income from trading activities, and the rest from governmental and independent grant-makers.

Jess Steele leads the DTA's consultancy service, the Pool, drawing on the practitioner expertise of the UK's development trust movement to provide high-quality consultancy on community enterprise and community assets. She develops new products and ventures for the DTA and is currently exploring international opportunities for joint ventures that nurture and network community enterprises from the ground up.

In a recent secondment to central Government she took the policy lead for assets and developed new policy and programmes to promote 'meanwhile uses' of empty town centre buildings and land.

Jess formerly worked for the British Urban Regeneration Association and in her background as a community activist and entrepreneur she led the award-winning 'Get Set for Citizenship' regeneration programme and established a range of local social enterprises including a publishing company, an environmental consultancy, a children's nursery, and a community finance company. She founded the creative outreach charity Magpie and has published extensively on local history. Jess developed the Community Allowance proposals to enable people on benefits to take up community regeneration work opportunities. She now lives and works from Hastings and is trying to save Hastings Pier.

Policy expertise includes asset-based development, community enterprise, worklessness and welfare, community participation, and seaside regeneration. All her work bridges policy and practice and aims to bring practitioners into a more central role in shaping policy.