

Bearing fruit

Good practice in asset-based
rural community development

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The Development Trusts Association would also like to express its deep appreciation of the support (and tolerance) we received from Kate Braithwaite of the Carnegie UK Trust.

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Jim Boote, (then) Chair of Constantine Enterprise Company

Elizabeth Moore, co-founder of Constantine Enterprise Company

David Milburn, Executive Director of Amble Development Trust

Roger Payne, Chief Executive of Ledbury & Area Development Trust

Alyson Allfree, Marketing Director of Rockingham Forest Trust

Tom Johnson, (then) Market Town Initiative Development Officer for Glendale Gateway Trust

Geoff Jackson, (then) Chief Executive of Trinity Community Partnership

David Brettell, consultant / occasional project manager for the Holy Island of Lindisfarne Community Development Trust

“The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it”

Michelangelo

Executive summary

This report looks at seven rural and semi-rural development trusts that have successfully developed and managed community assets.

Underpinning the whole project was a desire to see ‘what works’. Current policy approaches to rural community development are often based on the perspective of rural deprivation and disadvantage. However, narrowly focusing on ‘need’ may often miss opportunities to acknowledge and build on a community’s strengths and resources. Accentuating the positives and building on existing success can be far more empowering and liberating. Our approach has therefore been to focus primarily not on the barriers to developing an asset base but on what has worked and how development trusts have overcome those perceived barriers – modelling success rather than failure.

What all seven trusts had in common was an ability to mobilise their key stakeholders: their community, local businesses, local government, and other voluntary and community organisations. In other words, success had more to do with how they worked outside the boundaries of their organisations than with how they managed their own internal operations. The trusts we studied are satisfied with building a ‘good enough’ organisation and then focusing their energy externally to deliver the change they seek. In addition, they exhibited 10 specific characteristics:

- ▶ Bridging the gap between service delivery and policy development
- ▶ Working with the market
- ▶ A commitment to quality
- ▶ Accountability
- ▶ Ambition and passion
- ▶ Inspiring champions
- ▶ Investing in networks
- ▶ Embracing change
- ▶ Embracing risk
- ▶ Sharing responsibilities

Leaders within the trusts, whether they were paid staff or key trustees, personally embodied these 10 characteristics. However, if there is one lesson from the case studies in this report, it is that having a compelling vision for the future, an unshakeable belief in your community and the people who live within that community, a passion to make a difference and a belief that it is possible to make that difference – this is what underpins ‘success’.

Across the country there are many other stunning examples of rural communities taking responsibility for their futures – through village shops, sustainable energy generation, local food projects, affordable housing and much, much more. Are these communities special? Of course they are special – but they are not doing anything that could not be replicated a thousand times over if other rural communities also had that same faith, that same desire, that same belief and that same confidence.

Project context

Project outline

The Carnegie UK Trust's Rural Action Research Programme (RARP) is designed to influence the development of rural policy in several areas including the sustainable management of community assets. A theme group, including the Development Trusts Association (DTA), was created to take forward this work and our remit was to compile a series of case studies, examining the successes and challenges faced by a selection of rural development trusts from across the country.

The DTA decided to undertake a detailed analysis of six (subsequently increased to seven to reflect the increasing interest in housing as a community asset) rural development trusts that own, manage and / or run a community asset. In this context, a community asset is defined as a physical building, an area of land or a viable trading enterprise.

The analysis included desk research (business plans, accounts, strategic plans, policies, activities, agreements etc), face-to-face interviews with key people responsible for developing and managing the relevant rural assets, and an intensive facilitated 'study' day where these key actors could take quality time to share their experiences, ideas and learning. The primary objective was to gain a sound understanding of the history of the respective trusts, the underlying motivational factors that encouraged local social entrepreneurs / community activists to decide that change was necessary, the values and beliefs that underpinned this action, the skills and behaviours that were required at each stage of the process, and the networks / partnerships that both contributed to and impeded the desired change.

From this we aimed to identify and model the critical success factors from this group of rural members. Similarly, we aimed to identify the primary challenges that were faced, what could have been done better and how unforeseen crises were managed.

Research methodology

1 Identification of up to six (subsequently seven) rural development trusts which have developed sustainable rural assets

- ▶ Development of selection criteria
- ▶ Liaison with relevant DTA regional teams
- ▶ Initial discussion with identified members
- ▶ Project participation agreement and timetable confirmed between DTA and member trusts

2 Desk and telephone research

- ▶ Common case study format and content developed
- ▶ Review historical background to the participating development trusts
- ▶ Review of business plans and relevant operating procedures, strategies and policies
- ▶ Review of relevant external policy documents/strategies
- ▶ Initial telephone discussions to identify key issues

3 Face to face interviews with key people involved in developing the rural assets

- ▶ Development of common interview framework
- ▶ Clarification of key facts and understanding gained through desk and telephone research
- ▶ Critical questions (common and bespoke) to each development trust to identify 'underlying' motivation, values and beliefs etc
- ▶ Collation of photographs and quotes
- ▶ First draft of case studies prepared and circulated

4 Intensive 'study' day

- ▶ Key individuals from participating member trusts meet to review initial findings
- ▶ Identification of shared experiences, underlying motivation, values and beliefs
- ▶ Modelling exercise to identify key success factors and develop an understanding of how these could be developed / supported / encouraged / replicated in other rural community enterprises

5 Written case studies and summary of key findings

- ▶ Analysis of findings for each participating trust
- ▶ Input from the development trusts
- ▶ Agreement of final drafts and other feedback by member trusts
- ▶ Final draft report prepared including completed case studies and recommendations

Background information

A *Charter for Rural Communities*, produced by the Carnegie Commission for Rural Community Development, states:

“Looking to the future, we have sought to identify the essential ingredients of a thriving rural community of the future. They are:

- ▶ *Community ownership and management of local assets*
- ▶ *Stronger local governance and effective community action planning*
- ▶ *Strong social networks founded on high levels of volunteering and skilled support”*

In selecting the seven trusts to participate in this project, the DTA took into account these ‘essential ingredients’ whilst also trying to include a range of large and small, new and old, and geographically dispersed trusts. Out of many potential participants, those selected were:

- ▶ Constantine Enterprise Company, Cornwall
- ▶ Amble Development Trust, Northumberland
- ▶ Ledbury & Area Development Trust, Herefordshire
- ▶ Holy Island of Lindisfarne Community Development Trust, Northumberland
- ▶ Rockingham Forest Trust, Northamptonshire
- ▶ Glendale Gateway Trust, Northumberland
- ▶ Trinity Community Partnership, Lancashire

Two of the original choices were from Northumberland (which is a hot-bed of rural asset development and community enterprise) and this subsequently increased to three when the Holy Island of Lindisfarne Community Development Trust was added because of its interest in affordable housing – the number one issue in rural England.

However, given that we focused on ‘can-do’ development trusts with a track record of success, we were shocked to see one of the participating trusts effectively collapse during the course of the study. Trinity Community Partnership had operated successfully for some 45 years but a combination of funding changes and over-extending its capacity in an attempt to build its asset base resulted in the trust having to cease trading. Nevertheless, there are still important lessons to learn from Trinity’s experience and there is also hope of a phoenix rising from the ashes (see case study on page 39).

Underpinning the whole project was a desire to see ‘what works’. Current policy approaches to rural community development are often based on the perspective of rural deprivation and disadvantage. Rural communities invariably have to demonstrate ‘need’ in order to access scarce resources,

which is perhaps understandable given that demand for funding far exceeds supply. However, narrowly focusing on 'need' may often miss opportunities to acknowledge and build on a community's strengths and resources. Accentuating the positives and building on existing success can be far more empowering and liberating. Our approach has therefore been to focus primarily not on the barriers to developing an asset base but on what has worked and how development trusts have overcome those perceived barriers – modelling success rather than failure.

Asset transfer

Many development trusts have worked hard to build an asset base – land, buildings or businesses. However, a major push towards the wider ownership of assets within the community sector in England has come with *Making Assets Work: the Quirk Review of Community Management and Ownership of Public Assets*, published in May 2007. It is worth quoting at length from the report:

“The starting point is the recognition that optimising the use of public assets is not the primary objective: the over-riding goal is community empowerment. In a sense, we are moving from an assumption that the state’s role is to try to solve all social problems, to one where the state’s role is to help communities solve their own problems.... Each community has its own unique story – of landscape and heritage, of conflict and compromise, and of hopes and fears. Each confident community has the internal resources to generate its own energy to change and develop. Of course, it may need external help and support – but ultimately its success is in its own hands. This is why community development is central to successful local government and effective local government is necessary for communities to succeed.

The strongest assets of any community are its people; their character and their personal connections with the wider world. The fixed public assets in a community – the roads, the parks, the publicly owned land, buildings and facilities – are key resources for communities in their search for success but they are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for that success. Confident, capable and ambitious community groups and social entrepreneurs can succeed on the flimsiest of asset bases and despite the apathy of established authority. But they are more likely to succeed if they are less under-capitalised and if they receive support and assistance from local public and other agencies.”

The DTA has led a partnership delivering a pilot programme of asset transfer on behalf of the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). 20 local authorities engaged in Round 1 in 2007-08 and a further 30 have joined in 2008-09 with an additional 30 scheduled for 2009-10. Whilst the programme has yet to complete a detailed evaluation, initial signs are encouraging – but there is clearly a long way to go. Some local authorities are looking to offload liabilities rather than assets, many have concerns about the capacity of community organisations to manage assets and few really understand the need to transform assets through the transfer process – creating centres of enterprise and initiative rather than just doing ‘more of the same’ but with different governance arrangements.

Even so, the asset transfer agenda does offer significant opportunities for community organisations to take control of local public assets if the proper business case can be made. The DTA is now managing a new national Asset Transfer Unit of behalf of DCLG and this will be a resource for any organisation seeking to take ownership of local authority assets.

The DTA and development trusts

The DTA believes in supporting community activity, fostering a new spirit of enterprise and delivering the practical change that lies at the heart of building (or re-building) communities. We are a member-led organisation, accountable to our members and responsive to their needs and priorities, and this membership is growing rapidly – now standing at over 440, with a combined annual income of about £240 million (of which £95 million is earned income) and total assets of about £540 million.

Development trusts take a variety of legal forms. However, all development trusts are based on four common principles. They are about:

- ▶ Being engaged in the economic, environmental and social regeneration of a defined area
- ▶ Being independent, aiming for self-sufficiency, and not-for-private-profit
- ▶ Being community-based, owned and managed
- ▶ Being actively involved in partnerships and alliances between the community, voluntary, private and public sectors

Development trusts vary enormously with respect to the scope and scale of their activities. Responding to local needs, our members make things happen through a wide range of initiatives that include business start ups, managed workspace, recycling, environmental improvements, management of public space, micro credit, advice and debt counselling, welfare advice, energy efficiency advice, family support, child care

services, community grants schemes, affordable housing, volunteering, job training, supplementary education, youth work, community safety, transport schemes, festivals and arts activities, sports and leisure, community cafes and restaurants, electricity generation, garden centres, food markets, healthy living schemes.... and much, much more. Reflecting the title of a DTA publication, many of our member trusts are simply *Fabulous beasts*.

Our greatest resource and our greatest strength are our members. There is no 'typical' member – we work in both rural and urban areas with both large and small development trusts. What we do have in common is our approach, our belief in our communities and our commitment to change through community enterprise. And within our membership there is an extraordinary reservoir of talent and experience in creating wealth in communities and keeping it there. Through the DTA, this unique knowledge base can be shared across the movement, disseminating learning from each new success and each new achievement, and encouraging communities to take responsibility for their own futures

DTA rural membership

In 2004 there were 114 rural or semi-rural development trusts. As of August 2008, this had increased by over 50% to 220 trusts. The majority (110) are in England with particular concentrations in the North East, South West and Yorkshire & Humberside. However, the median total income had dropped by over 30% from £180,000 in 2004 to £122,700 in 2007 which indicates that many of the new members were relatively small and / or the income of the existing trusts was falling. In comparison, growth in membership of urban trusts increased by 56% but the median total income only dropped marginally from £290,350 to £284,540.

Looking at earned income, the median for rural and semi-rural trusts also dropped by over 10% from £19,650 in 2004 to £17,100 in 2007. Urban trusts faced an even greater decline of almost 40% but their median in 2007 was still £42,600 – almost two and half times higher than for rural and semi-rural trusts.

The figures for asset growth seem to be slightly more encouraging. The median value of assets held by rural and semi-rural trusts grew by 20% from £150,000 in 2004 to £180,000 in 2007 although some of this increase could be due to rising land and property prices. In comparison, the median value of assets held by urban trusts also grew by 20% from £208,210 to £250,000 – almost 40% higher than that held by rural and semi-rural trusts.

Median figures for staff employed by rural and semi-rural trusts fell from five in 2004 to two in 2007 while the median for urban trusts only fell from eight to seven.

The overall picture is clear. Rural and semi-rural DTA membership is increasing but the trusts are much smaller and many are struggling financially in comparison with their urban counterparts. Assets and earned income in particular are key indicators of sustainability, and these results from our membership survey confirm our perception that many development trusts in rural and semi-rural areas remain fragile and are not performing well in business terms, and therefore are not achieving as great an impact in their communities as they might.

However, some are certainly thriving and this project aims to identify and understand the key success factors.

Leadership characteristics

The Losehill Workshop

On 4-5 June 2007, we held a workshop at Losehill Hall, the Peak District National Park Learning and Environmental Conference Centre in Castleton, Derbyshire. The purpose of the workshop was, using an approach based on neuro linguistic programming (NLP) techniques, to identify the shared experiences, underlying motivations, and values and beliefs of key individuals from the participating trusts.

NLP is the practice of understanding how people organise their thinking, feeling, language and behaviour to produce the results they do. It is based upon the search for and the study of the factors which account for either success or failure in human performance. NLP also provides a methodology to 'model' outstanding performances achieved by exceptional leaders in their field. For over 30 years NLP practitioners have studied or modelled the behaviour and thinking styles of particularly effective and successful people in business, education, sales, therapy, sport, and personal development.

The workshop was led by Ralph Watson, an experienced NLP trainer with extensive experience of working with major private sector corporations. His task was to explore how we achieve success at an unconscious level and to model the key components. The agenda for the workshop included:

- ▶ The presuppositions that underpin modelling
- ▶ Internal representation systems and how they affect our 'map of the world'
- ▶ Why are some things so important? – an exploration of core values and their effects
- ▶ What we believe is what we are – how we frame ourselves and the world and how that supports us in achieving excellence
- ▶ Breaking the job down – looking at the tasks we carry out and how we formulate our unconscious strategies for each of them

All participants took part with a completely open mind and co-operated fully in the process over a full day of discussion, written tests and group exercises.

This was a new and very different approach for the DTA – seeking to understand what made some rural trusts particularly successful through looking at the qualities of the people who had contributed to that success rather than at their skills and experience. In practice, the outcomes of the workshop were varied – some things worked and others didn't. However, it was an interesting experience that arguably raised more questions than answers. It certainly provided food for thought in terms of suggesting a particular 'profile for success' and definitely warrants further investigation.

The workshop participants were:

- ▶ Jim Boote *(then) Chair of Constantine Enterprise Company*
- ▶ David Milburn *Executive Director of Amble Development Trust*
- ▶ Roger Payne *Chief Executive of Ledbury & Area Development Trust*
- ▶ Alyson Allfree *Marketing Director of Rockingham Forest Trust*
- ▶ Tom Johnson *(then) Market Town Initiative Development Officer for Glendale Gateway Trust*
- ▶ Geoff Jackson *(then) Chief Executive of Trinity Community Partnership*

Overview of findings

Myers Briggs Personal Style Inventory

Participants were asked to complete a Myers Briggs Style Inventory questionnaire before the workshop. This is a well-known and widely used psychological profiling tool which uses eight categories: Introvert / Extrovert; Intuitor / Sensor; Feeler / Thinker; Perceiver / Judger (for further information see <http://www.myersbriggs.org>). This allows for 16 possible personality 'types'.

Five of the six participants submitted a completed questionnaire and the results showed that four of the five were categorized as ENTJ – Extrovert / Intuitor / Thinker / Judger. This personality type can be summarized as:

“Frank, up-front, assumes leadership readily. Decisive and open. Quickly see illogical and inefficient procedures and policies, develops and implements comprehensive systems to solve organisational problems. Enjoys long-term planning and goal setting. Usually well informed, well read, enjoys expanding their knowledge and passing it on to others. Forceful in presenting their ideas and speaks with authority.”

This profile corresponds well with the types of challenges faced on a regular basis by the participants and shows some of the qualities that could be used as selection criteria in recruiting.

Purpose

A clear indicator in modelling is the subject's sense of 'purpose' in their role. Asked to explore this in open discussion groups, the most common words and phrases used, both in writing and observation were:

- ▶ Making a difference
- ▶ Shaping the future
- ▶ Empowering
- ▶ Creating a self help culture
- ▶ Controlling your own destiny
- ▶ A sense of doing something worthwhile

While this, in specific modelling terms, does not give us a true perspective on joint 'purpose', it does give us a commonality in perspective and also precursors the common values of the group. What we can take from this is certainly an attitude of working towards a longer term goal. There was a very strong sense of 'purpose' as opposed to doing a 'job'.

Supporting beliefs

In this section, we asked participants to discuss what they believed about themselves and the work of their organisation that made it possible to succeed. Common words and phrases across the group included:

- ▶ I can do it
- ▶ I know what is right
- ▶ Prepared to take risks
- ▶ Willing to accept failure and learn from the experience
- ▶ Confidence in others
- ▶ Understand and have the support of the community
- ▶ Selling yourself
- ▶ Find a way to work round things

Our interpretation of this is that the participants share a common supportive belief in the ability of themselves and their associates to get things done, solve problems, take risks that bring results and that they have the support and confidence of the community. There was also a common belief / attitude that they would find a way to overcome obstacles. This is in marked contrast to some community organisations that seem to give up and blame failure on government, society, legal obstacles etc, none of which were acknowledged as valid barriers by these individuals.

Values

Participants were asked to consider and discuss the things that were most important to them in their roles. The objective of this exercise was to elicit some of the basic values shared across the group, which would give us indicators for the 'attitude' that drives their behaviour. Common words and phrases were:

- ▶ Making a difference
- ▶ Independence
- ▶ Self-help
- ▶ Recognition
- ▶ Achievement
- ▶ Pride
- ▶ Impact
- ▶ Social Justice

Since values are stated in individual-specific language, it is not wise to generalise by changing the words and phrases themselves. However, the language patterns used across the group demonstrated a 'towards' bias which means that the individuals were geared towards meeting their values rather than worrying about what might go wrong.

Metaprogrammes

Metaprogrammes are the classifications of how we sort the world to fit with our own internal 'map'. They drive many aspects of our lives, such as motivation, decision making, relationships and even our 'comfort zone'.

There are arguably over 30 metaprogrammes running in each individual. For the purposes of this project, we focused on the following key metaprogrammes:

- ▶ Towards / Away from – is the individual motivated towards getting things or away from not getting them e.g. avoiding failure?
- ▶ Sameness / Difference – does the individual sort things by what they notice is the same or by what is different i.e. how do they respond to change?
- ▶ Internal / External – the frame of reference by which the individual makes value judgements concerning their performance. Who decides whether they've done a good job?
- ▶ Self / Other – where the individual puts their attention / importance. In this case, on themselves or on others i.e. who comes first?
- ▶ Global / Specific – how an individual prefers to operate i.e. big picture or detailed specifics
- ▶ Power / Affiliation / Achievement – where the individual places importance for motivation and attention

Results were gathered overtly through a short written test and covertly by listening to and analysing the language patterns displayed. The second method is usually most accurate since written tests are always matters of interpretation. The results were as follows:

All participants displayed a 'towards' metaprogramme – they are motivated by moving in the direction of the goal rather than by consequences. This follows on from the previous comment about 'risk taking'.

There was a strong tendency to 'difference' in that the participants all spoke of being comfortable with rapid change, being flexible and 'doing things differently'.

Frames of reference were more mixed, although words and phrases observed would lead us to believe that the majority were internally referenced whilst maintaining an external check. This means that they alone decide on the standards of their own performance whilst taking account of feedback as a source of information on which to make judgements.

All participants displayed a strong tendency towards sorting by 'other' – they sort by giving attention to the needs of others before the needs of themselves.

When we explored the 'Global / Specific' aspect, it became clear that the participants, in the main, demonstrated a preference to work at a 'global' i.e. 'big picture' level whilst also having the ability to move across the continuum as necessary.

There is also a strong tendency to being 'affiliators' – they get things done in cooperation with, and for the good of, others. They are concerned with peoples' feelings, needs etc. That said, there was also a tendency to utilise 'power' as a way of getting things done but this was over-ridden by the need to affiliate.

Conclusions

This was a fascinating process. One of the challenges is that we have been exploring the mental processes of individuals when it is usually groups of people that are responsible for the success or otherwise of a community development trust. Ideally, time would be spent with each individual to recover the project findings and validate them. However, the participants were identified as the 'movers and shakers' and so this process holds a high degree of relevancy.

The workshop outlined, admittedly in a fairly crude fashion, the mental processes displayed by the participants. However, there was a high degree of congruence within the participants which would indicate a possible approach to recruitment and / or the development of skills and strategies in the people responsible for other rural community trusts that are seeking to achieve a similar level of success.

Amble Development Trust (ADT)

The historic port of Amble, ‘the friendliest port’, has a population of about 6,500 and occupies a superb waterfront setting amongst some of the most beautiful coastal scenery in Britain. The town is located on the River Coquet estuary and is the southern gateway to Northumberland Heritage Coast. However, traditionally a fishing and mining community, by the early 1990s unemployment was rising, the main town infrastructure needed substantial work and there had been no significant investment in the area for some time.

Amble Development Trust was set up to tackle these problems and became a limited company in 1994 and a registered charity in late 1995. The trust’s membership currently exceeds 500, most of whom are local residents, with a management committee of 14 trustees. Eight of the trustees are drawn from the membership. Other trustees include councillors representing the town, district and county, a Harbour Commissioner, two Amble business representatives, an Amble’s Churches Together representative and the local police.

ADT has a trading subsidiary, ADT Northumberland Ltd, which hosts the increasing number of social enterprise projects developed by the trust.

The asset base

Fourways 1: A former pub, bought from a brewery for £1 and now valued at £470,000, this is a base for a wide range of local activities, including employment training, with space also let to tenants to generate income.

Fourways 2: Now the trust’s headquarters, this is a modern iconic building that cost £1.3 million to develop and is a hub for community activities including benefits advice and job centre services – but with space for commercial rent to generate income for the trust.

The Bread Bin: The only bakery in the town, the Bread Bin was bought for £135,000 in October 2004 when the former owner retired – saving seven local jobs. Although it doesn’t generate a profit, it makes a significant contribution to the community and has been an important component in the trust’s Centre for Local Food project.

► **Contributor** David Milburn
Executive Director

► **Location** Amble, Northumberland
► **Annual Income** £1,503,000
► **Asset value** £1,761,000
► **Staff** 17 *incl. trading subsidiary*

► **Contact details**
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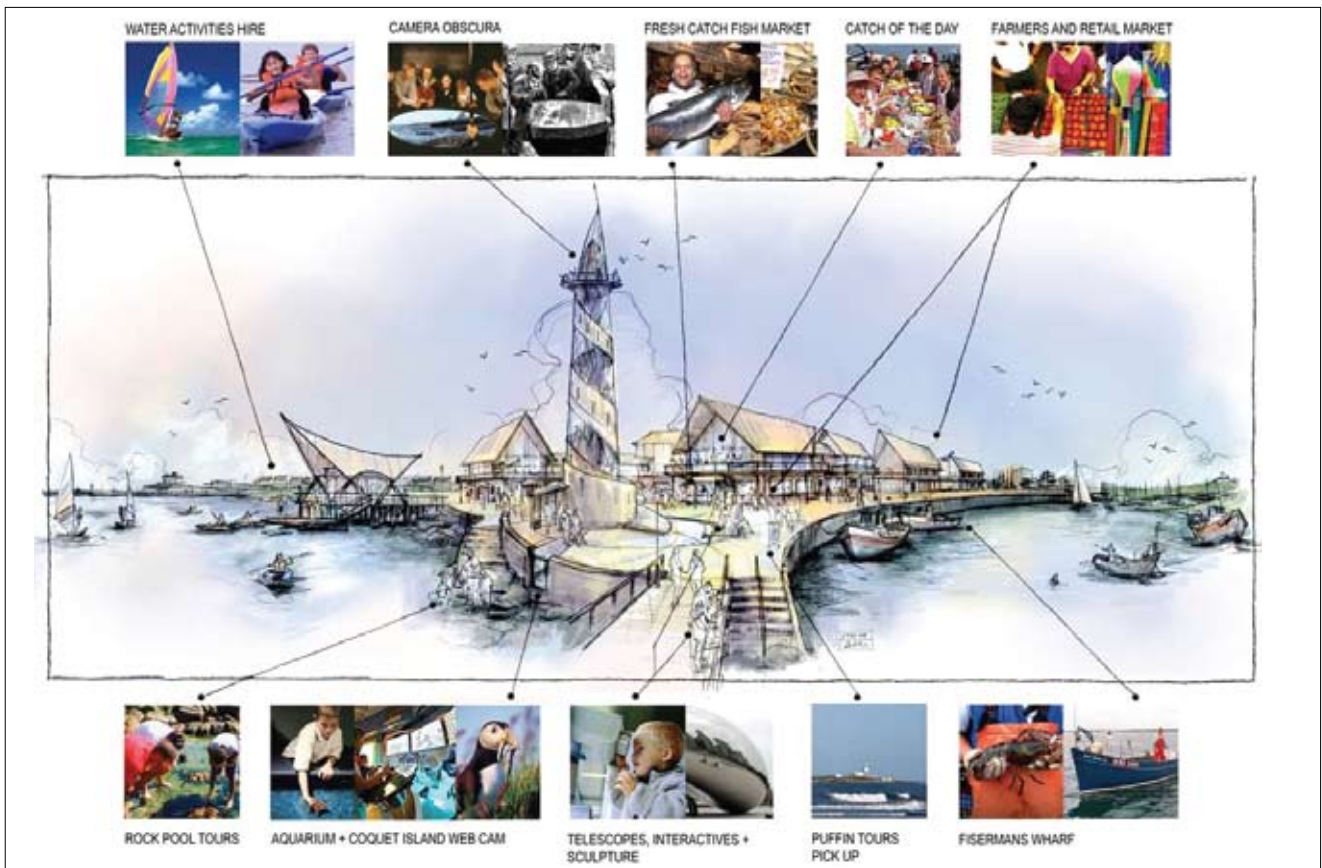
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The Co-op store: The latest and most ambitious of the trust's enterprises, the trust decided to buy the former Co-op store when it closed. Although the Co-op was looking for a sale price of £0.5 million, the trust was able to acquire the building for under £400,000 although there was a restrictive covenant attached that had to be removed. It will cost as much again to refurbish but will eventually become the trust's flagship for the Local Food project – housing the relocated bakery and other specialist food retail. However, the most ambitious component is the conversion of the first floor into a 'high end' restaurant in partnership with London's Shoreditch Trust (which already operates Acorn House in central London, described as 'the most important restaurant to open in 30 years' because of its commitment to organic and ethically sourced food).

Fourways Food: Now operating from Eshottheugh, just off the A1, this is effectively a local food hub and one-stop shop for locally sourced and home produced food and drinks. It acts as a showcase for local producers and also helps with collection and distribution to customers as far away as Newcastle (see www.fourwaysfoods.org.uk).

Other enterprises have included an aquaculture project to diversify Amble's seafood offer while the trust is also currently working on a consultancy basis with fishermen locally and in North Shields, developing measures to assist and drive forward the sector, with the opportunity of



the trust acting as an Intermediary. In the pipeline are a major leisure and retail development for the quayside and further work in the Town Square to create a large entertainment facility aimed at boosting tourist numbers.

ADT's existing commercial trading operations generate almost £150,000 in income with an additional £40,000 brought in through renting office space.

Community benefit

Apart from its asset and enterprise development programme, ADT has contributed to a wide range of regeneration and community initiatives:

- ▶ Restoration of the historic South Pier and promenade (funded by English Partnerships).
- ▶ Creation of a new town square as a focal point for the town – including the Gnomon (one of the largest sundials in Europe and accurate to within 15 seconds) and a historic trail depicted in carved stones, taken from original designs by Amble school children.
- ▶ Development of Amble Welfare – a community sports facility.
- ▶ Development of a drop-in centre for young people
- ▶ An employment counselling service.
- ▶ Play activities for children.
- ▶ The Ambler community newspaper.
- ▶ Delivery of an events programme including the annual Amble Sea Fayre Festival to raise the town's profile and increase tourism

Key lessons

- ▶ Develop your networks and relationships so you have early knowledge about opportunities and threats.
- ▶ Avoiding mission drift: assets are a means to an end, not an end in themselves so focus on outcomes and the social and economic benefits.
- ▶ Be prepared to review and, if necessary, change your legal and accounting contracts. The ADT Board was uncomfortable about moving from local solicitors and accountants but the trust required specialist assistance as the scope of its activities expanded.
- ▶ It's easier to say 'yes' than 'no' but be prepared to make difficult decisions. You may upset some people – even your friends – but the greater good has to come first.
- ▶ Make sure you deliver on your promises – funders (and customers) will come back for repeat business.



Key challenges

- ▶ Because of the success of ADT and its ability to bring in investment, sometimes the local community has unrealistic expectations of what can be done.
- ▶ Developing a Board that understands risk and investment. A decade ago the ADT Board would never have considered using loan finance – now they see it as a key strategic component in taking forward the trust.
- ▶ The ‘numbers game’ – developing a business case is always harder in a rural context because you have a smaller and more dispersed market’.
- ▶ Developing a succession strategy for key Board and staff members.



Top tips

- ▶ ‘Focus on what is unique about your community and local environment. What’s your unique selling point and how can you make the most of it?’
- ▶ ‘Make sure any proposed asset development is actually an asset and not a liability. Check and re-check your business case.’
- ▶ ‘If you ‘cheat’, you will get found out. Deliver on your promises.’

Constantine Enterprise Company (CEC)

Constantine is one of the larger parishes in Cornwall, located on the northern bank of the Helford River, and stretches five miles north to the Carmenellis Granite Ridge. There are about 1,650 residents. The traditional occupations were mining, quarrying, farming and fishing. Mining has now ended and while there were 24 milking farms less than 10 years ago, there are now only four – reflecting the decline in the traditional economy. There is a primary school of 120 children with another 120 children attending senior schools in Helston, Penryn and Falmouth (all about seven miles away). There is a GP surgery, a dentist, Post Office with a general store which houses the biggest off licence in the county, a Spar shop, an electrical shop, a butchers, a craft and local information shop and over 30 clubs and community groups. There is little division between ‘newcomers’ and long time residents – although, interestingly, much of the community activity has been sustained by the ‘newcomers’. Those rooted in the Cornish traditions have a ‘different pace and way of doing things but welcome all’.

In 1997 the Constantine Parish Council wanted ideas and projects to celebrate the millennium. A committee was formed of representatives from the village and the Parish Council, and a survey was undertaken with the help of Cornwall Rural Community Council which produced lots of different ideas around sport, arts, education, IT, heritage, and improvements to the local built and natural environment. To take forward these ideas, Constantine Enterprise Company (CEC) was formed in 1998. It registered for charitable status and VAT and soon after joined the Development Trusts Association.

The founding mission of CEC was:

“Constantine Enterprises Company endeavours to foster community co-operation thus enabling the residents of and visitors to the parish to celebrate its past, fulfil the potential of present opportunities and embrace the challenges to a secure prosperity in the next century.”

► **Contributors** Elizabeth Moore
*Chair of the Parish Council and
co-founder of CEC and
Jim Boote then Chair of Trustees*

► **Location** Constantine, Cornwall

► **Annual Income** £45,000
including the Tolmen Centre

► **Asset value** £182,000

► **Staff** None

► **Contact details**

Constantine Enterprise Company
The Tolmen Centre
Fore Street, Constantine
Falmouth, Cornwall TR11 5AA

01326 341 353

www.constantinecornwall.com/parish

The organisation's activities are all delivered by volunteer staff. This reduces operating costs and is a key component of CEC's ethos even though they recognise the danger of 'burn out' that this creates because of the huge demands placed on the core group.

The asset base

Tolmen Centre: The primary asset held by the CEC is a former Grade 2 listed Methodist Chapel. The listing restrictions limited what could be done with the building but, when it came up for auction, there were two other interested parties (a local builder and a potential restaurant venture). 85 people from the local community pledged a total of £15,500 and there was an additional offer of a £10,000 loan. CEC's bid of £20,000 was accepted although Elizabeth Moore had to pay the £2,000 deposit from her own pocket – confident that the pledges would be honoured.



The chapel was renamed the Tolmen Centre in recognition of the Great Tolmen Stone of Constantine which was destroyed in 1869, the subsequent uproar resulting in an Act of Parliament to protect ancient monuments. A funding bid to improve the building was submitted to the Cornwall Millennium Project programme although delays in the decision-making process mean the renovation was done in two phases:

► Phase 1 involved the restoration of the chapel itself, new toilets, heating, fire alarm systems and lift so that the building could be quickly brought into use and start generating income. This was completed in late 2000.

► Phase 2, funded by the ERDF Objective 1 programme, involved an extension with additional toilets including disabled toilets, a new room for ICT and a large display room for a heritage project as well as the refurbishment of the external vestry. This was completed in December 2003.

The heritage project was to display a collection of artefacts gathered during the 1990s, prepare educational materials for students of all ages from the village and collect local history books for reference with the intention of subsequently applying for full museum status.

The Tolmen Centre has subsequently thrived and is valued by people inside and outside the village. The downstairs was originally used for a Sunday School and now offers meeting rooms for local community groups and a community-run café with a couple of rooms rented to a local hairdresser and a homeopathic consultant. However, the upstairs (the former Methodist chapel) has been transformed into an exciting 180 person theatre space with the existing tiered pews forming a horseshoe around a central stage. The Tolmen Centre offers professional theatre performances, concerts (including an international guitar festival which last year attracted five of the world's top 10 performers), film shows, and cabaret shows as well as the occasional wedding or conference. Elizabeth Moore describes the Tolmen Centre as 'a phenomenal building with even more phenomenal volunteers. It's a focal point for the village but it's the people who make it special.'

When asked to describe the asset, former CEC chair Jim Boote rather dryly called it 'exciting, an object lesson in how to spend £420,000 in six years and use thousands of volunteer hours.'



Community benefit

Since the acquisition of the Tolmen Centre, the CEC has been heavily involved with many other projects including:

- ▶ Setting up a parish newspaper and an associated parish printing resource
- ▶ Environmental improvements to a village bus stop (with a mosaic done by local children)
- ▶ Education and training courses
- ▶ Guides to local walks and a heritage trail
- ▶ A community internet access point
- ▶ A pre-school Kids Club.

A 'green team' has also been established to look at environmental and sustainability issues (geothermal, PV and solar panels, wind and water power), with 'experts' who live in the parish joining the team. The CEC is now seeking to buy a local woodland and an associated quarry where it can develop small workshop units and a hydro-electric scheme as well as a new heritage trail focussing on the quarrying history of Constantine.



Key lessons

- ▶ CEC's success has been built on its ability to bring together and co-ordinate local networks and the many local community organisations operating in the village and surrounding area
- ▶ Don't look over people's shoulders – if they make a 'hash' of anything, remember it's a learning experience - and everyone is a volunteer.
- ▶ Be wary of empire building – be prepared to hand over projects when up and running
- ▶ Use the skills that already exist within the local community – in this case, artists, builders, plumbers, a chartered surveyor and local business people
- ▶ Use your networks to bring in additional expertise e.g. Cornwall Rural Community Council, Kerrier Regeneration Team and the Development Trusts Association
- ▶ Get the relationship right with the local council/councillors

Key challenges

- ▶ Financial sustainability – a small rural community has limited spending power and cashflow is always a problem.
- ▶ What happens if the 47 bus comes along and runs over the key activists? CEC has great volunteer input but there remains limited strength in depth within the organisation.
- ▶ Getting young people involved – how do you motivate them?
- ▶ Maintaining enthusiasm amongst volunteers

Top tips

- ▶ 'Take risks, be brave and persevere'
- ▶ 'With the right vision you can achieve anything'
- ▶ 'Village networks are powerful and need respect – get them on-board'
- ▶ 'Your greatest asset is your people – if you can't trust people, you're going nowhere'
- ▶ 'Seeing is believing: having an asset as a focal point gives you credibility'

Glendale Gateway Trust (GGT)

Glendale Gateway Trust is based in Wooler, a small rural market town located in North Northumberland, close to the border with Scotland. The settlement lies on the edge of the Northumberland National Park and in the foothills of the Cheviot Hills. It is located within the Berwick-upon-Tweed Borough Council area. The resident population is less than 2,000 although the catchment area served by Wooler as a market town is estimated at about 6,000. Like many rural areas, Wooler's traditional prosperity was based on agriculture although, with the decline of this industry, it has re-orientated itself as a local service centre, focusing on tourism, recreation and leisure. Wooler is known as the 'Gateway' to the surrounding Glendale area because of its function as a hub for the rural hinterland. The Glendale economy which includes Wooler is dependent on micro-businesses with no enterprise employing more than 50 staff.

GGT was established in 1996 with a clear mission statement:

"The Glendale Gateway Trust is established to promote, maintain, improve, encourage and advance the prosperity and social welfare of the inhabitants of the town of Wooler and the surrounding area administered by the former Rural District Council of Glendale."

It is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee with a maximum of 18 trustees. Of these, 10 are appointed from local organisations (including local authorities), five are elected from the membership and three are co-opted by the Executive Committee. In 2001, GGT was given the responsibility for administering the Countryside Agency's Market Town Initiative programme for Wooler. A 'healthcheck' was carried out to support the Market Town Initiative programme and this has provided the basis for the trust's subsequent activities.

The asset base

The Cheviot Centre: GGT's flagship project is the Cheviot Centre – a multi-purpose community building that has six core tenants (including the Tourist Information Centre) and weekly hirings by about 12 local community organisations. The trust believes that the success of the Cheviot Centre has been instrumental in securing community support for

- ▶ **Contributor** Tom Johnston
*(then) Market Town Initiatives
Development Officer*
- ▶ **Location** Wooler, Northumberland
- ▶ **Annual Income** Approximately
£195,000
- ▶ **Asset value** £1,147,000
- ▶ **Staff** Three full-time staff plus
one full-time and two part-time at
Wooler Youth Hostel.
- ▶ **Contact details**
Glendale Gateway Trust
Cheviot Centre
12 Padgepool Place
Wooler
Northumberland NE71 6BL

01668 282412
www.wooler.org.uk

subsequent projects and has helped to develop an admirable reputation for quality of service delivery. A solar panel roof was also installed over the children's play area to provide both wet weather protection and an environmentally friendly source of energy (accounting for about 20% of energy use during the summer months). The Cheviot Centre generates over £40,000pa in income which virtually covers staff and running costs.

Affordable housing: GGT acquired numbers 25, 27, 29 and 33 High Street and a large parcel of land to the rear. Number 33 has been refurbished and is let to a local family. The other units are shops with flats above. The latter are now rented to local young people while the redundant shops were used as exhibition spaces (funded by Northern Rock and LEADER+) before bringing them back into commercial use as a gift and coffee shop which generates £4,000 annually in rental income. Bought for £250,000 the housing units are now worth about £600,000 and they generate about £12,000pa in rental income. In addition, the accompanying parcel of land was sold to Home Housing which built 15 new affordable homes for local people, bringing over £1.6 million of investment into Wooler. It is worth noting that if such an opportunity arose again, the trust would act as a developer in its own right rather than selling the land to a housing association – but at the time the Board lacked the confidence to take responsibility for such a major project. This was reflected in the fact that the trustees were initially very reluctant to take a charge on the land or use loan finance until a local benefactor effectively underwrote the investment.

Interestingly, the trust worked with Northumberland County Council to measure the impact of the spend on 33 High Street. Under the LM3 methodology, 3.0 is the maximum score – meaning that each pound spent is 'recycled' within the local economy up to three times. This development scored an almost perfect 2.9 which meant that virtually none of the investment 'leaked' out of the town. As a comparator, Northumberland County Council scores 2.19 for their procurement budget.

Retail and workspace: Most recently, the trust has bought the former co-op building at 31 High Street for £203,000 with support from the Northumberland Strategic Partnership and ONE Northeast single programme funding. The trust has allocated a further £110,000 from reserves to refurbish the building which will be used for retail, community and small business start-ups.



Wooler Youth Hostel: GGT places great importance on developing its asset base in terms of building sustainable income streams for the future and it admits (proudly) that it is opportunistic if the right deal comes along. The next deal was actually Wooler Youth Hostel which in March 2007 the YHA decided to close as part of a national rationalisation programme (despite it making a small profit on a turnover of about £80,000pa). GGT immediately opened negotiations and was able to put together a portfolio of funding to buy the hostel which caters for 5,500 overnight visits per year. A £60,000 refurbishment package was also secured to upgrade the facility from a two star to three star rating. This has now become the trust's major social enterprise and there are plans to further develop the site – although, ironically it has also caused the trust a few headaches. Previously all GGT trading activity was designated as 'primary purpose' and so could be carried out under the auspices of the charitable body but HM Revenue and Customs have ruled that a new trading subsidiary will be required for the hostel.

Community benefit

GGT has increasingly moved towards the regeneration agenda. However, they have undertaken a wide range of other projects including:

- ▶ The Josephine Butler Display: dedicated to the Victorian social campaigner who was born in Glendale and was a tireless champion of women's rights
- ▶ The Youth Drop-In: One of the earliest projects identified in the 1996 village appraisal, the Drop-In centre has now reached maturity as the wholly independent Wooler Young People's Association. The trust owns the premises on the High Street and leases them to the Association at a peppercorn rent. The facility is open at least three evenings a week and regularly has up to 25 youngsters from the ages of 13 to 19 in attendance

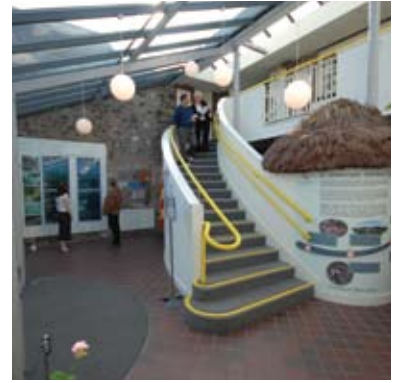
- ▶ Wooler website: the website is administered by a GGT trustee as a gateway to the town and is now a small profit centre within the trust's budget. The site is part of the Villages Online Project which seeks to link the surrounding communities in this isolated area. It gets about 70,000 hits per month
- ▶ The Glendale Festival is a sub-group of the trust and consists of a group of local volunteers who organise an annual free music and arts festival in Wooler. The event is now in its seventh year of operation
- ▶ Wooler to Etal Cycleway: the trust has been working with Sustrans on the Pennine Cycle Way which passes through Wooler and will be one of the longest recognised routes in the country. Two new traffic free stretches have been created and this initiative will play an important part in sustaining the local economy by attracting new visitors
- ▶ The Cheviot Hall: a former community centre gifted to the trust which was converted into three bed-sits for young people

Key lessons

- ▶ The first step is often the hardest. GGT 'cut its teeth' on the development of the Cheviot Centre which was a difficult and challenging process – but the trust learnt many valuable lessons
- ▶ Success breeds success. Having a proven track record of development and delivery opened up new opportunities for the trust
- ▶ The asset base has provided some financial stability for the trust and made the trustees more confident about taking on new projects
- ▶ GGT was initially under pressure to be a 'traditional' volunteer-led community organisation but the initial investment from the Market Town Initiative allowed the recruitment of a paid worker and this acted as catalyst to encourage the trust to be more ambitious
- ▶ Look outwards not inwards – your potential market may come from outside the existing community so network and learn from others

Key challenges

- ▶ High property prices
- ▶ Taking on loan finance for the housing development behind the High Street units was a major step for the GGT trustees. Loan finance is often essential in developing an asset base but it is outside the operational 'comfort zone' for many community organisations
- ▶ Finding the right trustees. Even though GGT has had a significant impact on Wooler and has real credibility with the community, it is still difficult to get people actively involved. The five elected trustee positions have never been contested so co-optees have a vital role in the management of the trust



- ▶ The tension between consolidation and further projects. Should the trust be looking to further expansion or should it focus on making what it already has work better?
- ▶ Maintaining positive relationships with key partners like the local authority and other community organisations. The success of the trust sometimes creates a ‘too big for their boots’ syndrome



Top tips

- ▶ ‘Focus on developing a reliable income stream that allows the organisation to plan ahead and maintain its independence’
- ▶ ‘Strike up a good relationship with key funders – you never know when a little extra cash may be available’
- ▶ ‘Never be shy to seek expert opinion’
- ▶ ‘Be aware of the wider picture – locally, regionally and even nationally – so you know which way the ‘wind is blowing’”
- ▶ ‘Recognise and celebrate success’

Holy Island of Lindisfarne Community Development Trust (HILCDT)

The Holy Island of Lindisfarne lies 8 miles south of Berwick-upon-Tweed and two miles off the Northumberland coast. It is connected to the mainland by a road causeway which is covered twice a day by the movement of the tide. The current population is about 150. Tourism has taken over from fishing as the main economic activity on the island although work patterns are erratic in an industry which is mostly part-time and low paid. An estimated 500,000 visitors arrive each year, attracted by the priory (English Heritage), the castle (National Trust) and the spectacular environmental heritage. Religious tourism in the form of 'pilgrimages' and 'retreats' play a major part with the island's connections with Bede, St Cuthbert and the Lindisfarne Gospels.

Access to services is limited. There is a daily bus service off the island in the summer but this reduces to twice-weekly from September. There are no medical services on the island and police cover is based in Berwick-upon-Tweed. The island has a volunteer fire and coastguard service. The island primary school is linked with Lowick School on the mainland while secondary provision is delivered by a boarding service in Berwick-upon-Tweed.

The popularity of the island as a holiday destination has had a marked effect on home ownership. There are approximately 160 homes on the island of which over 50% are now 'second' or 'holiday' homes. People move away in search of work and affordable housing which has contributed to a further cycle of decline. It was this desperate need for affordable rented accommodation which acted as the catalyst leading to the creation of the Holy Island of Lindisfarne Community Development Trust. Officer support from the Community Council of Northumberland and Berwick-upon-Tweed Borough Council helped the community conduct public meetings and establish a steering group. A constitution was adopted in June 1996 for a 'holding body' and charitable status obtained in September 1996. The trust is currently being incorporated as a limited company by guarantee with the same charitable objects as the existing body. This new company will take ownership of all existing assets.

► **Contributor** David Brettell
Consultant / Project Manager

► **Location** Holy Island of
Lindisfarne, Northumberland

► **Annual Income** Group income
£242,000

► **Asset value** £470,000

► **Staff** The trust employs ad hoc
consultancy / project management
support when required. The
Lindisfarne Centre employs one full-
time and two part-time staff.

► **Contact details**

Holy Island of Lindisfarne
Community Development Trust
c/o Lindisfarne Centre
Marygate

Holy Island, Berwick-upon-Tweed
Northumberland TD15 2SD

1289 389004

www.lindisfarne-centre.com

The asset base

Affordable housing: Providing low-cost social housing was, and remains, the first priority of the trust. After undertaking a housing needs survey, in 1998 it purchased some land (with the help of the Tudor Trust) and built five new houses – three 2-beds and two 3-beds. The houses were built to a high energy efficiency standard to keep running costs low. Tenant priority was given to local young people and today all but one of the tenants work on the island. Two tenants have recently joined in a commercial venture to take on the lease for one of the hotels on the island – protecting local jobs and ensuring that wealth generated circulates locally. In addition, the floor above the Lindisfarne Centre (see below) has been converted into two flats which provide additional affordable rented accommodation for local families while work is underway to build a further four affordable housing units. All properties are managed by the trust and bring in about £16,000 per year. Surplus income from rents is held in an investment fund to support future property maintenance and other trust projects.

In 1996, the school on the island was in ‘mothballs’ with only one child attending. Today, the school has eleven children, six of whom live in trust properties. This is a simple but strong indicator of the impact of investing in affordable housing.

The Lindisfarne Centre: In 2001, the former Castle Hotel was purchased by the trust. Following community consultation and a feasibility study, it



was converted into an island heritage centre and includes an interactive exhibition about the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Viking raid on the island in 793AD. The Centre includes a gift shop and attracts 11-12,000 visitors per year. It is managed by a separate trading subsidiary which pays £3,000 pa in rent to the trust as well as generating profits of about £5,000 pa.

The Gospels Garden: In March 2004, a small pocket of land opposite the Lindisfarne Centre was donated to the trust by Cheswick Estates which owns most of the island. The trust turned the space into a formal garden retreat with specially designed garden furniture, flower beds and mosaics. The centrepiece of the garden is a magnificent two metre high carved wooden cross depicting the life of St Cuthbert. The garden generates about £3,000 per year through visitor donations.

The Ouse (Inner Harbour): The trust now owns the land and water within the Inner Harbour including the pier and fishing huts – another donation from Cheswick Estates.. Working with the local fisherman, the trust has produced a Harbour Management Plan and is looking at income generation opportunities through mooring hire, franchises (e.g. mobile fast food outlets) and farming mussel beds as well as generally improving the built environment with new seating, lighting, disabled access and toilet facilities.

The former Lifeboat Station: The latest project is the conversion of the former lifeboat house into a Lifeboat Heritage Museum. A £6,000 feasibility study has been carried out and options are now being discussed with the RNLI. Again, this project will also see the building and surrounding land gifted to the trust by the landowner, Cheswick Estates.

Natural England Partnership: Natural England, which manages the National Nature Reserve of Lindisfarne has approached the trust and asked them to be a lead on various projects. This is likely to include a new visitor leaflet for the island and the conversion of the former Coastguard Lookout into a visitor centre for wildlife. The lookout tower is currently rented by Natural England but will be gifted to the trust by Cheswick Estates.

Community benefit

As well as actively developing its asset base, HILCDT has also engaged in a range of community activities including:

- ▶ Small scale environmental improvements in the two visitor car parks
- ▶ Provision of rooms for community use and a set of networked computers (part of the Villages On-Line Project) within the Lindisfarne Centre
- ▶ A series of summer festivals including a 'Spirit of Time' festival and two jazz festivals
- ▶ Supporting the village hall, the local school and other local community groups



Key lessons

- ▶ Don't try to do everything yourself. Play to your strengths and buy in services and support when required e.g. HILCDT sub-contracts its financial management to the nearby North Sunderland & Seahouses development trust
- ▶ Community-owned housing is the number one priority for all rural communities – and it generates a reliable and predictable revenue stream
- ▶ Leadership and drive are what make the difference. There are opportunities around for asset development in every community
- ▶ Build relationships that last. The relationship with Cheswick Estates started off slowly but because the trust has been able to demonstrate a track record of success, the relationship has continued to develop and is now profoundly important to the trust

Key challenges

- ▶ Half the houses on the island are 'second' or 'holiday' homes. The owners represent an untapped resource – both financially and in terms of developing community projects
- ▶ There is a danger that local people get used to HILCDT being seen as the solution to any problem which mitigates against higher levels of community activism
- ▶ Taking advantage of local government structural reforms e.g. unitary authorities, which will leave a 'gap' that needs to be filled e.g. service delivery, community forums, one-stop shops
- ▶ Getting trustees to understand the opportunities and responsibilities relating to loan finance
- ▶ Culture change – moving from the 'village charity' approach to managing an effective and efficient community enterprise
- ▶ Persuading 'over-protective' local authorities to work in a partnership of equals

Top tips

- ▶ 'Don't take on an asset just because it's on offer. It may be a liability so make sure the business case works'
- ▶ 'Get your governance right – make sure you have the right mix of skills and experience'
- ▶ 'Don't be afraid of loan finance'
- ▶ 'Maximise the voluntary input but be ready to sub-contract or bring in professionals when you need them'
- ▶ 'Be ambitious'



Ledbury & Area Development Trust Ltd (LADT)

Ledbury is a thriving market town, east of Hereford and west of the Malvern Hills. It is an ancient borough, dating back to the Domesday Book, but has a main-line rail connection to London, and is close to the M50 and via that to the M5. The town has a large number of timber framed buildings, and won the 2003 Britain in Bloom competition in the category of 'Small Town'. However, in common with other parts of Herefordshire, Ledbury continues to face a number of major challenges including an over-dependence on traditional and declining industries (including agriculture), a lack of higher paid employment and low family incomes, and the out-migration of the younger population due to high housing costs, low earnings and a lack of quality job opportunities.

Between 2002 and 2005, Ledbury and 22 surrounding villages were able to access funding through the Market Towns Initiative programme. The programme was run by a partnership involving a range of local organisations - supported by staff from Herefordshire Council - who all came together under the banner of the Ledbury & Area Regeneration Partnership. Over 50 projects benefited from this £300,000 programme, with funding allocated by the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands, and administered by the Partnership. Around £700,000 of matched funding was also drawn into the programme.

The Partnership realised that once it had allocated the funding from the MTI programme and ensured that the projects were professionally administered and monitored, its 'raison d'être' was at an end. However, it felt strongly that it did not just want to 'switch out the lights' and walk away. To do that would have meant losing many of the benefits of the programme – including excellent partnership working. In December 2004 the full membership of the Partnership formally agreed that a new organisation called the Ledbury & Area Development Trust Limited should be established and this was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee on 5th January 2005. LADT is not a registered charity although this is under review.

LADT has a particular focus on helping younger people to obtain higher skilled, higher income employment, and to find affordable accommodation.

► **Contributor** Roger Payne
Chief Executive

► **Location** Ledbury, Herefordshire
► **Annual Income** £30,000
► **Asset value** £350,000
► **Staff** One

► **Contact details**
Ledbury & Area Development Trust
St Katharine's
High Street
Ledbury, Herefordshire HR8 1EA

01531 636304
www.ledburyadt.org

The asset base

Ledbury Cottage Hospital: The trust's primary asset is Ledbury Cottage Hospital for which it has signed an initial 25 year lease. The £1m refurbishment of the Cottage Hospital will create six affordable shared equity apartments for local people, and 1,600 square feet of managed workspaces targeted at local young entrepreneurs. The trust is working with English Partnerships, Advantage West Midlands and Two Rivers Housing and the development is scheduled to open in early 2009. The development should generate an income of around £14,000 per annum. This includes the basic rental income and additional income which will be generated through renting out meeting rooms, virtual office services and specialist ICT facilities.

LADT is currently in discussions with a number of local businesses about them 'sponsoring' the workspaces at the Cottage Hospital, and creating bursaries for young entrepreneurs starting up businesses in the workspace, as well as offering mentoring and training opportunities to those young entrepreneurs.

LADT is also looking at other asset-based enterprise opportunities and is in the early stages of discussion with one organisation concerning the refurbishment of a building into a mix of affordable accommodation and music-based initiatives targeted at – though not restricted to – young people in the town and surrounding villages. The initial target for this enterprise is to generate an annual profit of £25-30,000 per year which will help to make the trust effectively financially self-sufficient.

LADT people: Interestingly, LADT does not see its asset base simply in terms of buildings and businesses. Arguably, its key asset is human capital and particularly Roger Payne, the Chief Executive, who spends about 15% of his time working on consultancy projects with other market towns, in conjunction with the Centre for Economic and Social Regeneration at Staffordshire University, and with projects on behalf of the Development Trusts Association.

Community benefit

Apart from the asset and enterprise initiatives, LADT has contributed in other ways to the local community:

- ▶ With funding from Awards for All, the trust worked with the Ledbury Tourist Association to create an online database of businesses, retail, entertainment, and accommodation in and around Ledbury

- ▶ The trust prepared a business plan for the redevelopment of the iconic Master's House in Ledbury. Based on a survey of 500 people, two public consultative events that attracted 250 local people and a feedback session involving a further 150 people, the plan was accepted by Herefordshire Council – leading to an agreement to commit £2.92 million to the project. A local Ledbury Action Group and a Friends of the Master's House Group has also been established

Key lessons

- ▶ A culture change was required with the asset development – and a different skills set required by the trust compared with the activities undertaken by the unincorporated Market Towns Partnership
- ▶ Generating income is essential if you are to be independent and sustainable. 'Generating income and profit equals survival'
- ▶ Question what it means to be a 'community organisation' and be prepared to review and redefine as required
- ▶ A 'can do' attitude is essential and be prepared to 'learn by doing'.
- ▶ Communicate formally and informally at all levels within the community – not once, but again and again!

Key challenges

- ▶ Identifying revenue income. LADT had no money when it was first established and had to seek funding, and to take out a five-year loan with Impetus, a local CDFI, to cover cashflow requirements - while the Chief Executive has also worked on a voluntary basis in between funded projects
- ▶ Broadening the trustee base. LADT is very aware that it suffers from the 'white middle class men' syndrome and is keen to address this – however, it recognises that it is important to take time to select the right person and not just do it 'because we ought to'
- ▶ Balancing community consultation with being entrepreneurial. Sometimes there is a need to just 'get on with it'

Top tips

- ▶ 'You need private sector input to help you be entrepreneurial, public sector input to help access funding, and VCS input to bring the community along'
- ▶ 'Keep the message simple and prepare an 'elevator pitch' so you can get over your message in 45 seconds when necessary'
- ▶ 'You need to be very clear about why you are developing an asset and be 100% committed to making it happen'



Rockingham Forest Trust (RFT)

Rockingham Forest Trust is an unusual member of the Development Trusts Association. Rather than being focussed on one specific community, it is an environmental and rural development charity which works to improve the environment of the ancient Rockingham Forest, some 200 square miles of Northamptonshire. The trust's mission has been to keep the forest beautiful, distinctive and thriving. In practice, this involves working with local people to conserve the Forest's landscape and traditions, whilst supporting the rural economy in adapting to the challenges of modern life. RFT formalised this important role in October 1995 when it became a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. Whilst the trust has come a long way since it was formed, it has remained true to the original concept of celebrating and conserving a very special corner of England.

The trust works in three key ways in achieving its mission:

- ▶ **Education:** school visits, literature and project events for all ages, helping spread the message and encourage involvement in environmental activity
- ▶ **Partnerships:** with local landowners, communities and other like-minded organisations
- ▶ **Direct delivery:** managing projects that tackle key issues in the Forest, and developing associated country sites

The asset base

Stanwick Lakes: The jewel in the crown is Stanwick Lakes, a 650 acre reserve in the Nene Valley that includes lakes, countryside paths and meadowland. It attracts large numbers of breeding and over-wintering wildfowl birds, is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and forms part of the proposed Nene Valley Special Protection Area.

Following completion of aggregate extraction, the site was restored in 2004 and is now owned by East Northamptonshire Council and managed by the trust on a 125-year lease. In February 2004 the trust agreed a mission statement:

- ▶ **Location** Rockingham Forest, Northamptonshire
- ▶ **Annual Income** £950,000 in 2007/8
- ▶ **Asset value** £2,200,000
- ▶ **Staff** 13
- ▶ **Contact details**
Rockingham Forest Trust
Drill Hall House
Benefield Road, Oundle
Peterborough PE8 4EY

01832 274278
www.rockingham-forest-trust.org.uk
www.stanwicklakes.org.uk

“To develop a site which will provide enhanced recreational and leisure opportunities, increasing the opportunities for access into the countryside and bringing people closer to the countryside, whilst also encouraging conservation by protecting and improving existing habitats and by the creation of new habitats.”

► Phase 1 of the site opened in January 2006, providing easy access from the A45, car parking, an extensive network of accessible footpaths and cycle paths, a bird hide, an adventure playground, access to fishing lakes, and facilities for the trust’s on-site rangers and volunteers. The cost of this phase was £2.24 million: funded 50/50 by the local authority and grants secured by the trust. Last year Stanwick Lakes attracted over 180,000 visitors.

► Phase 2 sees the building of the Stanwick Lakes Centre. This will be a landmark development, planned to be one of the first carbon neutral building in Northamptonshire, offering excellent opportunities to demonstrate the benefits of sustainable design and operation. The centre will provide a focus for a wide range of community education and recreational involvement related to the countryside, conservation, and healthy lifestyles, all linked to activities and facilities available on the rest of the site. The centre will also offer:

- Interpretation and exhibition areas
- Meeting and conference facilities
- A retail unit with an emphasis on ‘environmentally friendly’ and fair-trade products
- A café with indoor and outdoor seating facilities
- An indoor educational pay-to-play area for children
- Offices for RFT staff

These facilities, along with the income from the existing car park, will be run as a social enterprise, generating profits that can be reinvested and contribute towards the longer term sustainability of the site. The long term aim is to cover the site’s running costs through trading surpluses, and contribute towards the Trust’s overheads.

The project budget for Phase 2 is £2.2 million. East Northamptonshire Council is contributing £1.2 million with the trust raising the balance. Construction work started in early 2008 and the new Stanwick Lakes Centre will open in April 2009. Visitor numbers are projected to then increase to 250,000 per year.





Stanwick Lakes Visitor Centre for Rockingham Forest Trust



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Community benefit

The trust is responsible for a wide range of rural development and heritage projects, all of which seek to increase understanding of the countryside and engage local communities in conservation work to protect and enhance the rural environment. In 2007-08 alone:

- ▶ 60 farms, local businesses and individuals were assisted with rural diversification projects
- ▶ The RFT-led Community Planning Network held events on a number of topics such as energy efficiency, affordable housing and village design statements
- ▶ The People of the Forest project involved local communities and schools in researching, recording and celebrating the heritage of their area through 14 events involving nearly 400 local residents and 80 school children
- ▶ A small grants scheme has awarded nearly £170,000 for projects such as a community shop, rural cinema outreach, and a resident consultation exercise about potential uses for some unused land on the edge of a new housing estate

In all, RFT has supported and worked with over 50 community projects and has now developed a co-operation project to share resources and expertise with an environmental organisation in Denmark.

RFT has paid particular attention to the needs of local people in developing its work, especially with Stanwick Lakes. There has been, and continues to be, wide-ranging consultation with the local communities including Irthlingborough, Rushden, Raunds, Stanwick and Higham Ferrers. By involving the local communities, and taking their needs into account, RFT has promoted a sense of 'ownership' of the site and many local people have been encouraged to get involved. Currently there are over 60 volunteers and they play a key role in the organisation, through conservation work, helping with events, fundraising, leading guided walks and contributing specialist knowledge.

Key lessons

- ▶ As the scale of the RFT operation has grown, an organisational culture shift was essential – moving to an more entrepreneurial, business-like approach so that long term dependency on revenue grants can be reduced
- ▶ Community planning/consultation is an important tool – people feel more empowered and more involved if they can input into and influence developments. Involve the community from the start
- ▶ Asset development is not for everyone. It's easy to say but difficult to do
- ▶ Sometimes projects come to a natural end. Have the honesty and courage to acknowledge this and move on

Key challenges

- ▶ Financial – getting a capital package together is difficult. Getting a reliable revenue stream is even more difficult
- ▶ Getting the right business model to make an asset work. You need to look beyond the immediate charitable objectives if you're building for the future
- ▶ Good staff and volunteers are hard to find – but essential

Top tips

- ▶ 'You have to believe in your heart that what you are doing is genuinely worthwhile'
- ▶ 'If you have an asset in mind, check out why no one has previously developed it. Do your research and make sure you haven't missed anything'
- ▶ 'Look 10-20 years ahead and get your business model right'
- ▶ 'Focus on quality, quality, quality'
- ▶ 'Think carefully before taking on an asset – because it may actually turn out to be a liability. Sometimes you have to grit your teeth and just say 'no''

Trinity Community Partnership (TCP)

A cautionary tale - Trinity Community Partnership effectively ceased trading in summer 2008. The figures provided relate to the previous financial year.

Trinity Community Partnership is based in Clitheroe, Lancashire and served both the town and the 38 surrounding rural parishes in the Ribble Valley. Clitheroe lies on the southern edge of the Forest of Bowland and, whilst it has one of the lowest unemployment rates in England, the rural hinterland shares many of the problems that are common to rural communities across the country. TCP was established as an unincorporated association in 1963, was incorporated in 1994 and became a registered charity in 1999. It grew from being a Youth Club to being one of the largest and most high profile community enterprises in Lancashire and an exemplar 'community anchor'.

As late as 2007, TCP was running ten projects:

- ▶ Ribble Valley Community Transport
- ▶ Jigsaw Environmental (organic horticulture)
- ▶ Trinity Centre (youth and community centre)
- ▶ St Mary's Community Arts Centre
- ▶ Database (ICT Learning Centre)
- ▶ COOSC (childcare project)
- ▶ Jigsaw Pantry (catering)
- ▶ Prosperity Recycling
- ▶ Jigsaw Employment Service
- ▶ Trinity Learning Group (vocational learning)

Whilst working with all sections of the community, TCP focussed particularly on delivering learning and employment programmes to people with disabilities, people recovering from mental health problems, and the long-term unemployed.

However, after 45 years of successful delivery, the organisation collapsed in 2008. TCP had decided to buy and refurbish the St Mary's Centre – a £4 million project. Half of the money was committed by a local philanthropic trust and other funding was lined up from Ribble Valley Borough Council and the North West Development Agency (NWDA). Unfortunately, despite

▶ **Contributor** Geoff Jackson
then Chief Executive

▶ **Location** Clitheroe, Lancashire

▶ **Annual Income** £1,300,000

▶ **Asset value** £156,000

▶ **Staff** 50 paid staff and 45
volunteers

▶ **Contact details**

Trinity Community Partnership is no longer actively trading.

The Stable Trading Company CIC
53 King Street
Whalley, Clitheroe
Lancashire BB7 9SP

07870 908 159

Website under construction

initial indications of support, after an eight month delay NWDA finally decided not to support the project. The lateness of the notification, along with the negative decision on the grant application, made the TCP Board reluctant to proceed, and there was no Plan B in place that would fit into the vendor's timetable. As a result, the TCP Board withdrew its interest even though this meant losing the investment of time and money already committed.

At the same time, TCP also began to run into a series of operational problems. The disruption caused by the abandonment of the St Mary's project was compounded by a reduction in European funding, and the loss of several key New Deal contracts (despite an outstanding Grade 1 OFSTED award) to private sector contractors that promptly offered to sub-contract the work back to TCP but at a reduced funding rate. The long-standing Chief Executive, Geoff Jackson, left and several key Board members resigned.

In an attempt to resolve TCP's problem, the DTA funded a review by a team of external consultants. Their report questioned the long term viability of TCP as it was currently operating and the Board therefore took some hard decisions: the community transport subsidiary was floated off as an independent enterprise; the ICT hub would be closed; and Jigsaw Pantry and Jigsaw Environmental would be transferred to the Stable Trading Company, a new CIC in which TCP had an initial interest (see below). Redundancies were issued as appropriate. However, the Board also decided to keep the TCP charity brand alive for the foreseeable future as it attempted to retain an interest in some of its original work

The asset base

The Trinity Shop: This retail unit generated about £10,000 per year in rental and was used as security whenever TCP needed to borrow money. However, TCP is now selling the asset to cover liabilities.

A phoenix from the ashes?

The problems that TCP has faced recently are a cautionary tale for any rural/semi-rural trust that is endeavouring to develop an asset or deliver services under contract. However, in some ways these problems have encouraged a new and innovative approach to delivering social good – through a new form of partnership involving the private sector and through entrepreneurship and enterprise. This development is arguably more likely to deliver sustainable outcomes and embed the delivery of social benefits within Clitheroe and surrounding communities.



The new development is the Stable Trading Company, a social enterprise, set up as a joint venture between TCP and John Atherton, a Property and Land Agent from nearby Whalley. Subsequently Wrigley's solicitors (Leeds) set up the Stable Trading Company as a Community Interest Company. The company has been set up on the basis of a share-based CIC, with 1000 shares for John Atherton, 1000 shares for voluntary and community sector investment (including TCP), with a further 1000 shares available to local investors at £500 each share but in a non-voting capacity. Only voluntary & community sector investors and John Atherton can appoint directors, and the Board has deliberately been kept small with no more than eight local directors. Geoff Jackson, the former TCP Chief Executive is a key player in the new organisation.



The social enterprise has been set up to deliver on community economic development and social inclusion projects. The CIC aims to create opportunities for voluntary work, learning and employment for those people who have been disadvantaged in the labour market, prioritising the needs of disabled people (particularly people with a learning disability and people recovering from a mental health disability). The private and voluntary and community sector partners will be putting different things into the CIC. Atherton's will be using its business experience to bring in share-based investment (and have already had a promise of £50,000 from the first investor), whilst TCP will be transferring in their Jigsaw Environmental and Jigsaw Pantry enterprises.

The CIC will be based in Whalley (near Clitheroe) in the Old Stables block (the stables from a former coaching inn). It is a large property, owned by Atherton's, but it will be sold to the CIC, ready for redevelopment as a community hub involving a retail outlet (shop and café – selling local organic produce grown by the new enterprise), business development space, and a community facility for use by other local community groups. The Old Stables block was granted planning permission in December 2007. Three other locations have also been targeted for development:

- ▶ 20 acres of land in Old Langho (two miles from Whalley). A lease for this land has been agreed at a peppercorn rent with one of the potential CIC investors, on the understanding that TCP's Jigsaw Environmental would relocate onto this site in the summer of 2008 from its existing base in Gisburn
- ▶ 50 acres of land at Calderstones, Whalley (one mile from the hub), this being the base for a forensic mental health hospital where TCP was already undertaking some accredited vocational learning programmes with hospital residents

- ▶ 40 acres of land in ownership of the Great Harwood Showground Committee. Access to this important piece of land is currently under negotiation between John Atherton and the Committee.

The latest position is that Jigsaw Environmental and Jigsaw Pantry will be absorbed from TCP into the Stable Trading Company from 1 September 2008 – with Jigsaw Environmental maintaining operations at the Gisburn site which is registered as organic with the Soil Association – and retaining the existing learning franchise with Accrington & Rossendale College for 20 disaffected learners. Jigsaw Pantry will maintain its urban base in Accrington, delivering high quality accredited vocational and non-vocational learning annually to 40 people with learning disabilities.

Most recently, the Stable Trading Company has agreed to take on the development of a similar business in North Yorkshire – Growing with Grace – an operational organic horticulture social enterprise complete with a 250-strong Vegetable Box scheme. This complements Jigsaw Environment and Jigsaw Pantry activity as well as improving potential cash flow via a retail unit on the A65.

This is an exciting project! It has a strong rural focus in the heart of Ribble Valley, and yet it neighbours the urban communities of Pennine Lancashire (East Lancashire), making it easy for the CIC to expand its focus on social inclusion activities for disadvantaged learners, long term unemployed people, and people with disabilities for both isolated rural communities and the Pennine Lancashire urban communities – all within the context of developing an entrepreneurial and enterprising approach to income generation.

Key lessons

- ▶ Bring in Board members with business and enterprise experience and include representation from key stakeholders (local authorities, colleges etc.)
- ▶ Develop a business-based culture of enterprise and innovation within the Board of Trustees – backed with training on risk management
- ▶ Prioritise the development of a strong asset base
- ▶ Ensure there are ‘fire-walls’ between core activities so if one project fails it does not impact on other activities
- ▶ Build networks and partnerships that are appropriate – abandon the ones that are just nice to go to



Key challenges

- ▶ Ensuring your Board of Trustees understands risk and how to manage risk
- ▶ Developing an enterprise culture across an organisation – everybody needs to understand financial management and their roles within the ‘business’
- ▶ Money, money and money. An asset base against which to borrow or significant reserves can tide you over temporary cashflow problems which otherwise can be fatal



Top tips

- ▶ ‘Develop good links with your local authority and particularly the regeneration department (or equivalent)’
- ▶ ‘Put your assets into a holding company to protect them if your operational activities go wrong’
- ▶ ‘Set up an overdraft facility when you are in a ‘fit and healthy’ financial situation and not when you are desperate’
- ▶ ‘When involved in networks and partnerships, be there for the ‘common good’ and not your own narrow interests. In the long run, this builds respect and pays dividends’
- ▶ ‘Join the Development Trusts Association or an equivalent network so that you know about policy developments and can learn from the best practice established by other practitioners’
- ▶ ‘Ditch the charitable ‘can shaking’ and focus on making a profit that can be reinvested to meet your social objectives’

The Carnegie Commission's 10 characteristics

The Carnegie Commission for Rural Community Development's *A Charter for Rural Communities* (June 2007) identified 10 interrelated characteristics of a dynamic, vibrant, engaged, sustainable rural community of the future. These are:

- ▶ 1 Identifying, utilizing and optimising assets
- ▶ 2 Achieving fairness for everyone
- ▶ 3 Empowering local governance
- ▶ 4 Increasing resources for community benefit
- ▶ 5 Enjoying locally relevant services
- ▶ 6 Enriching social capital and well-being
- ▶ 7 Valuing local distinctiveness
- ▶ 8 Developing reliable infrastructure
- ▶ 9 Enhancing environmental capacity
- ▶ 10 Supporting a dynamic local economy

The DTA has attempted to map the primary interests of the seven case studies in this publication against these characteristics:

	CEC	ADT	LADP	HILD T	RFT	GGT	TCP
Identifying, utilizing and optimising assets	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Achieving fairness for everyone				✓		✓	
Empowering local governance	✓		✓				
Increasing resources for community benefit	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
Enjoying locally relevant services					✓		✓
Enriching social capital and well-being	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Valuing local distinctiveness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Developing reliable infrastructure		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Enhancing environmental capacity	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Supporting a dynamic local economy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Comment

In terms of delivering against the ten characteristics, all seven trusts prioritise asset development, social capital, local distinctiveness and the local economy. All have a commitment to fairness but arguably only two see it as a primary outcome. Similarly, only two have a primary commitment to empowering local governance – all contribute to this through community involvement in local decision-making and through consultation with local communities but most actually have a relationship with their local authorities that can best be described as ‘constructive tension’. Participation in the design and delivery of local public services is also limited – reflecting the capacity issues involved in operating in a rural environment with a dispersed population.

Interestingly, Trinity Community Partnership probably met the most ‘characteristics’ of all the case studies and yet it ceased trading in summer 2008. This suggests that an additional characteristic could be added for community organisations: ‘High impact, enterprising and financially resilient’.

Key findings

The myths

This report aims to identify the key 'success' factors from a study of seven very different rural and semi-rural development trusts. Initially we examined these organisations from a traditional management perspective, looking at their leadership, governance, strategies, delivery programmes, fundraising, and marketing. We thought we would find that their success was due to well-tested management habits like outstanding marketing, well-oiled and practiced delivery and rigorously developed strategic plans. In fact, being successful is not just about building a great organisation and scaling it up, site by site and pound by pound. On the contrary, we found a number of areas that, although important, don't really determine whether an organisation is really successful, such as:

- ▶ **Perfect Management:** Some of the trusts we studied are not exemplary models of generally accepted management principals. Although adequate management is necessary, it is not sufficient to deliver success.
- ▶ **Innovation:** Although some trusts came up with radical new ideas, others have taken old ideas and adapted them until they achieve success.
- ▶ **Vision and Mission Statements:** All of the trusts studied have a clear vision, mission and values. However, none spent much time fine-tuning what was written down – most were too busy living it.
- ▶ **Large Budgets:** We discovered size doesn't correlate with impact. Some of these trusts have made a large impact with large budgets; others have achieved a large impact with very small budgets.

Delivering success

What all seven trusts had in common was an ability to mobilize their key stakeholders: their community, local businesses, local government, and other voluntary & community organisations. In other words, success had more to do with how they worked outside the boundaries of their organisations than with how they managed their own internal operations. The trusts we studied are satisfied with building a 'good enough' organisation and then focusing their energy externally to deliver the change they seek. In addition, they exhibited ten specific characteristics:

► **Bridging the gap between service delivery and policy development:**

the trusts may have started out by focusing on delivery but they eventually realised that they also had to impact on wider policy to effect change. Most are deeply involved in various cross-sectoral partnerships and working groups to ensure their knowledge and experience shapes the wider 'political' landscape within which they operate.

► **Working with the market:** No longer willing to rely on traditional notions of charity, or to see business as the enemy, these trusts managed an internal culture change and have found ways to work with the market and develop income generation enterprises that contribute both towards their long term stability and the achievement of their social goals. They see their organisations as rooted in values and principles but recognise enterprise and entrepreneurship as a powerful mechanism to facilitate the empowerment of communities – developing independence and resilience.

► **A commitment to quality:** None of the trusts are willing to accept second best. This applies both to taking pride in the standard of services and facilities from which their users benefit ('Our community deserves the best') and in meeting commitments to funders and other investors – 'delivering on promises'.

► **Accountability:** All of the trusts are committed to consulting and involving their communities. Some have grown out of parish plans or MTI healthchecks and all seek the views and input of local people – often as volunteers. At the same time, they recognise the need to balance community with opportunity and are willing to take unpopular decisions if they are the right decisions.

► **Ambition and passion:** These trusts are all marked by the passion of their staff and board members. They all want to make a difference, they all want to make their communities a better place to live, they won't accept second-best and they won't accept 'no' for an answer. Their view is that they 'can do' and they'll find a way around problems rather than accepting defeat. Each of them sees something unique in their communities and something of real value that is worth fighting for.

► **Inspiring champions:** Successful rural development trusts build strong communities of supporters who help them achieve their larger goals. They value volunteers and external champions not only for their time but also for their commitment. They create emotional experiences that help connect supporters to the trust's vision and core values. These

experiences convert others who in turn recruit others in viral marketing at its finest. The successful trusts nurture and sustain these supporters over time, recognising that they are not just means, but ends in themselves.

- ▶ **Investing in networks:** Many community organisations see networking as a drain on their resources, diverting them from the more important task of delivering services. However, these trusts recognised networking as an investment. They are also committed to supporting other community organisations, freely sharing knowledge and experience and building platforms for collaboration rather than competition. The best example of this is perhaps the Northumberland Federation of Development Trusts (FoNDT) which has acted as a platform to launch a number of joint ventures as well as influencing policy at a strategic level. All of the trusts are also actively involved in DTA networks, regionally and / or nationally, and actively encourage visits from other members via the DTA's Knowledge & Skills Exchange programme.
- ▶ **Embracing change:** All of the trusts studied are flexible and have responded positively to changing circumstances and opportunities. Some have mistakes along the way – most obviously Trinity Community Partnership! However, none of them believe the world owes them a living and they have re-invented themselves to reflect the external environment. They are able to let go of projects that have come to a natural end and respond to new needs.
- ▶ **Embracing risk:** Part of the shared culture change and the entrepreneurial spirit is linked to a willingness to take risks. This may be around using loan finance, it may be around developing new services and products, moving out of their comfort zone to achieve their objectives. If something goes wrong, their attitude is to try something different rather than giving up. Even Trinity Community Partnership, which ceased trading after 45 years of operation, has found a new and different way of responding to the needs of its community.
- ▶ **Sharing responsibilities:** The leaders of all these organisations exhibit charisma but they don't have oversized egos. They know they need to involve others, encourage people to take responsibility and give people the space to 'fail'. They all see their communities as a resource, a reservoir of potential that can be activated rather than a passive source of 'problems' that need to be solved. They see their challenge as helping both individuals and communities to take responsibility for their own futures – encouraging self-reliance and self-help.

The seven rural development trusts we studied displayed a majority of these ten characteristics. But they didn't always, and they don't all employ them in the same way. Some initially incorporated only a few characteristics and added others gradually. Yet they all converged on developing more of these characteristics, not fewer. When a development trust possesses all of these characteristics simultaneously, it creates a momentum that fuels further success. As one participant said: 'It's like pushing a snowball down a hill. At first, it's hard work. But once it gets going, momentum builds and it starts rolling on its own.'

Leadership

The workshop held at Losehill Hall in June 2007 opened a Pandora's Box. That four of the five participants undertaking the Myers Briggs assessment should show the same pattern is statistically unlikely to be a coincidence. There was also a marked congruence around purpose, beliefs, values and metaprogrammes. With further work it would be possible to create a profile for a 'perfect' rural trust Chief Executive. All the participants would sign up to the 'ten characteristics that deliver success', all were driven to 'make a difference' and all had confidence in both their own abilities and in the 'rightness' of their cause.

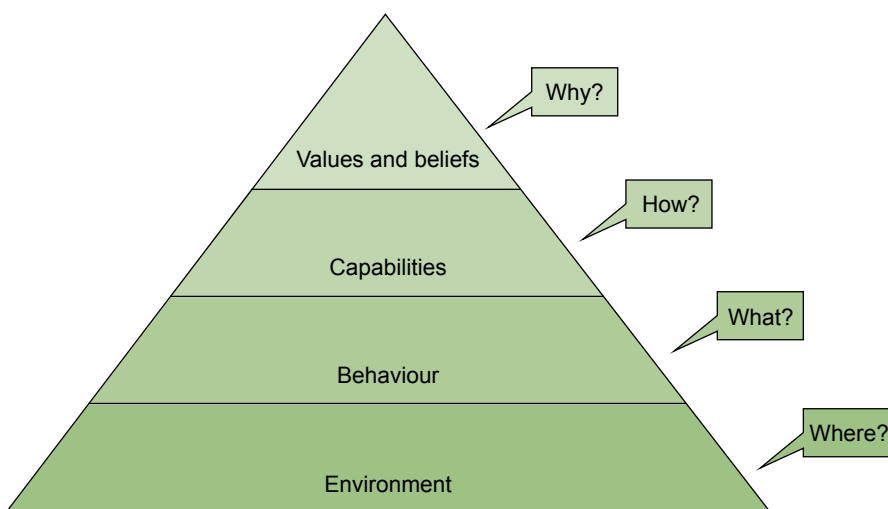
Of course, leadership is not just delivered by paid staff (and certainly not at Constantine Enterprise Company or Holy Island of Lindisfarne Community Development Trust, neither of which employ permanent staff in their core trust). The role of the boards of trustees is very important. All the workshop participants said that a good working relationship with their respective Chair was essential and most benefited from dedicated, quality voluntary input by trustees. Certainly having the right mix of skills and experience represented on a board is important. However, even with the successful trusts, it was often a struggle to recruit and retain trustees and sometimes the real leadership did come from the paid staff. Indeed, sometimes the qualitative change in the success of the trust coincided with the appointment of the first staff.

This is not to denigrate the input of trustees. When reviewing Constantine Enterprise Company, for example, the message was very clear: 'nothing would have happened without Elizabeth Moore'. Similarly, we were quoted the example of one Chair who was described as 'extremely driven and he won't take 'no' for an answer. Even when he was in hospital on a dialysis machine, he was on the phone chasing people and trying to persuade someone to invest in a new project.' We suspect both of these individuals would have shared the profiles generated at the Losehill Hall workshop.

A final comment for consideration: four of the six workshop participants had a private sector background. Unfulfilled within such an environment and wanting to 'make a difference', arguably they embody a synthesis of the best of the private sector and the best of the community sector. Perhaps that's the recipe for success?

The Logical Levels Model

In undertaking this report, the DTA made use of the Logical Levels model - a tremendously powerful tool for understanding what works and what doesn't work. Essentially, the premise of the model is that changing something lower down the pyramid won't deliver sustainable change to the higher levels. However, changing something at a higher level will cascade change down to the lower levels.



If a problem arises at one level, the solution is likely to be found in a higher level. Certainly people (and organisations) often make the mistake of leaping in at the Capabilities level ('what do we want to do') and then wonder why things don't work as expected - rather than first focusing on Values & Beliefs i.e. being clear about the 'big picture', the 'why?'.

Similarly, many dysfunctional organisations also focus on the Capabilities level to explain where things are going wrong e.g. 'it must be a skills and training issue', when the real problem is more profound – such as a lack of organisational alignment, where people aren't 'on message' because they don't understand 'the message' and are therefore not working towards the same goals. To quote Albert Einstein: 'The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them'.

This approach potentially has important implications for the Carnegie UK Trust's Rural Action Research Programme in understanding how to achieve the 'dynamic, vibrant, engaged, sustainable rural community of the future':

- ▶ Input at the Environment level by, for example, taking on a local asset as a base for community development may be important but it will not in itself deliver the success we're seeking.
- ▶ Input at the Behaviour level by, for example, encouraging local sourcing of food may be important but it will not in itself deliver the success we're seeking – although by changing for the better what people do it may also change where they do it.
- ▶ Input at the Capabilities level by, for example, identifying and addressing skills and training needs for rural community development may also be important but it will not in itself deliver the success we're seeking – although it may well change for the better both what people do and where they do it.
- ▶ Input at the Values & Beliefs level by, for example, building a shared vision for a community, or a 'can do' attitude where the community takes responsibility for meeting its own challenges, is getting close to the magic ingredient that delivers the success we're seeking – and it will impact on how things are done, what is done and where.

If there is one lesson from the case studies in this report, it is that having a compelling vision for the future, an unshakeable belief in your community and the people who live within that community, a passion to make a difference and a belief that it is possible to make that difference – this is what underpins 'success'. Across the country there are many other stunning examples of rural communities taking responsibility for their futures – through village shops, sustainable energy generation, local food projects, affordable housing and much, much more. Are these communities special? Of course they are special – but they are not doing anything that could not be replicated a thousand times over if other rural communities also had that same faith, that same desire, that same belief and that same confidence.

Appendix

Interview questionnaire

DTA / CUKT Rural Asset Development Research project

Organisation name

Interviewee name

Position

Length of time with trust

Region

Agreed to be part of programme

Interview date and location

Interview carried out by

Your participation in this research will be acknowledged when the findings are published.

These questions will compliment the knowledge gained from information received in advance from the trusts and the more people centred questioning / work carried out through other processes.

In addition:

This will be supplemented with specific queries regarding the information received to date on each of the trusts:

- ▶ Business / strategic plans
- ▶ Healthcheck reports
- ▶ Operational procedures and policies
- ▶ Memorandum and articles of association
- ▶ Press / media coverage
- ▶ Impact mapping / SROI if available
- ▶ Board reports

Collation of photographs will be carried out on site but also via the trusts submitting pictures. Quotes will be gained and where possible interviews will be taped on dictaphone during the face to face interview and at the study day.

The experience of the individual trust and the role of ABD

▶ 1

What are the vision and the core objectives of your trust?

Establishing the purpose of the trust.

Why does it exist?

▶ 2

How would you describe your community asset?

Managing building, enterprise, community development, people?

How does trust identify the asset?

▶ 3

What was behind the development of the asset?

Motivation?

Means to an end, end in itself?

▶ 4

What role did the trust play in developing the asset?

Leader, partner, instigator, innovator etc. brings in history

▶ 5

How does the asset contribute to the delivery of the trust's core objectives?

Checks out depth and importance of ABD in the scheme of things

▶ 6

What resources were required in getting started?

Eg finance, people, buildings, partnerships etc.

▶ 7

What competencies / skills did the trust have available when you started out?

Skills mix, importance of people in right place at right time

▶ 8

Have you needed to alter the mix of competencies / skills over time?

Does managing an asset bring new management demands and, if so, how have these been addressed?

▶ 9

What were the implications for the trust and community in defining and developing an asset?

Areas of learning, conflict, agreement, consultation, empowerment etc

▶ 10

What were / are the implications for the organisation in managing an asset?

Nuts and bolts, demands of running a 'business', culture change?

▶ 11

What is the long term prospect for your asset(s)?

Sustainability, future growth projections, turnover etc.

Generalising the learning and experience.

Identifying what is transferable, key challenges and strategies for success

▶ 12

Where do you see the key opportunities for ABD in rural areas?

Gaps in the market, delivery of public services, economic restructuring etc

▶ 13

What do you think are the key challenges facing any rural trust seeking to develop an asset?

Generalising their experience, capacity issues

▶ 14

What would be your five 'top tips' for any rural trust seeking to develop an asset?

Generalising learning, provide a process of change guide for others

▶ 15

What does 'success' mean to you in terms of ABD in rural areas?

Can you define it, quantify, measure it?

▶ 16

What would be your five 'top tips' for any rural trust seeking to manage and maintain a "successful" asset?

Generalising learning, how can we learn from it, replicate etc AFTER an asset has been developed

▶ 17

What potential does ABD really offer with regard to achieving sustainability for rural DTs?

How important is ABD for rural trust?

How realistic is generalising asset ownership and management?

▶ 18

What are the five key lessons you have learnt along the path of ABD?

Opportunity to present other issues that may not have been raised – do's and don'ts, went well, would change?

▶ 19

Who provided the leadership in developing your trust / your trust's asset?

Where did leadership come from?

Charismatic individual / wider group; extent of community involvement; active involvement of external agencies

▶ 20

What was / were the trust's leader(s) leading people towards and away from?

Identifying goals and having clear purpose

▶ 21

Specifically, who was / were the trust's leader(s) leading?

Identifying key people, key interest groups, clarifying relationship with funders and other agencies)

▶ 22

How did / does the trust's leader(s) demonstrate leadership?

What sort of behaviour best keeps people on track with the goals and purpose?

Any other tips/anecdotes or comments?

Across the country there are many stunning examples of rural communities taking responsibility for their futures – through village shops, sustainable energy generation, local food projects, affordable housing and much, much more.

The project was designed and written by
Charlotte Marwood *DTA Rural Enterprise Manager* and
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