

# MOFFAT TOWN HALL REDEVELOPMENT TRUST



## DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY LEADER PROGRAMME:

### FINAL REPORT FOR GRANT DG98

#### 1. BACKGROUND

1.1. This final report relates to the Grant received from Dumfries and Galloway LEADER Programme DG98 [LEADER]. The original dates for the Project were set as 8<sup>th</sup> September 2010 to 7<sup>th</sup> September 2011. However, our Project Manager did not start duties until 1<sup>st</sup> November 2010. Also due to prolonged timescales of dealing with major funders, and D&G Council, there was a slippage in time-scales for achieving end points. However, because of efficient management of the overall budget, there were sufficient funds available to extend the Project, and with approval of LEADER the Project was extended to the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2012. As will become apparent in the body of the Report this has had major benefits in achieving the Project's outcomes.

1.2. Moffat Town Hall Redevelopment Trust [the Trust] was established in 2008 as a Company Limited by Guarantee, a registered Charity and a Building Preservation Trust, with the aim of securing the future of Moffat Town Hall by refurbishing it and redeveloping it for the benefit of the Community. This followed significant community consultation through an Awards for All grant from BIG Lottery.

1.3. Between 2008 and 2010 the Trust undertook significant work to establish architectural plans and costings for redevelopment of the Hall through a Growing Community Assets grant from BIG Lottery. The cost of full refurbishment and redevelopment of the Hall according to these original plans was £3.2 million. Despite a huge amount of work by the Trust and encouragement by BIG Lottery we were unsuccessful in obtaining a major capital grant from them. This coincided with the 'credit crunch', and the subsequent tightening of award criteria and funding to the third sector which has had major implications across the whole sector, not just ourselves.

1.4. Positive outcomes from that period, however, included an award in principle from Historic Scotland of £210 000 for external and structural repair to the Hall on the basis of matched funding being available. The Trust also gained agreement from D&G Council to take over ownership of the Hall for £1 on condition that funding for redevelopment was in place.

1.5. As a result of this setback, the Trust reviewed its vision for the Hall and reduced the size of the Scheme to £1.8 million. This also resulted in a refocus of some of the aims to increase the emphasis on the heritage aspects of the Hall to align it more to potential grant funding from Heritage Lottery Fund [HLF]. An outline application to them received a very positive response and the Trust was asked to submit a Stage 1 Application for funding. It was this encouragement which led to the LEADER application, and successful grant funding.

1.6. Matched funding for the LEADER grant of £18 000 was met through a grant from Dumfries and Galloway Council [£7 000]; Scottish Power Renewables who donated a sum of £2 000 to the Project; and the balance met through anticipated Trust Volunteer time of £ 9 000.

## **2. THE PROJECT**

2.1. The Project was approved for funding by LEADER on 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2010 for commencement on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2010. The primary aims of the Project were:

1. Secure major capital funding, and initial revenue funding to ensure progress with the overall Project.
2. To coordinate the legal transfer of ownership from D&G Council to the Trust.
3. To develop tender documents for contractors, and procurement, in conjunction with the Design Team. Negotiate interim transfer agreements with D&G Council for continued provision of services during the construction phase.
4. To further engage with the Community through establishment of a User Group and network with local businesses.

2.2. An advert was placed in local papers on 30<sup>th</sup> September and received a good response from both local and more distant applicants. Following interview and presentations by short-listed candidates, Gerard Godfrey was appointed with a commencement date of 1<sup>st</sup> November. This has been an immensely successful appointment. Gerard has brought wide experience of project management, including significant project development and 'hands-on' managerial experience in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector; he has also worked in a senior position at D&G Council. Both of these have been of critical value; in addition Gerard has been totally committed and enthusiastic about the project 'over and above' the formal needs of the post.

2.3. Gerard has managed the project on a day to day basis, with constant communication by e-mail and telephone with the Chair of the Trust. Regular update meetings have also been held, and monthly reports to the Trust Board have been submitted, either in writing or verbally as appropriate.

2.4. Regular financial reviews have been undertaken with the Treasurer of the Trust, and monthly reports given to the Board. During the period of the Project it became clear that some anticipated expenditure headings were not being used expected. This particularly applied to consumables and administrative support. This resulted from Gerard undertaking more of the administrative tasks upon himself for reasons of efficiency. With agreement from LEADER virement of funds from these underspends into the Project Management line has been the most effective means of financial control and has enabled the time-line of the Project to be extended as indicated in 1.1.

## **PROGRESS**

### **3. Capital Funding**

3.1. A major driver for the Project was to secure major capital funding to enable the whole scheme to progress. As indicated in 1.5. initial emphasis was placed on Heritage Lottery Fund who were indicating the potential for a grant of up to £400 000 as long as significant heritage education was included within the application. Considerable work was undertaken to develop this application, which also included discussions with Moffat Museum Trust as potential partners. Visits to other sites that had undertaken similar developments were undertaken, especially to Gunsgreen House which had obtained significant HLF funding. Despite early encouragement, HLF asked for more work to be done which resulted in the Trust taking the decision to withdraw our original application. Further work was undertaken to strengthen the heritage and community aspects of the bid, and it was resubmitted for September 2010. However, HLF's budget was totally oversubscribed and we were unsuccessful. During this period discussions had also take place with SRDP, again with no success. We also re-examined BIG Lottery following relaunch of their Growing Community Assets programme, but were clearly told that we would not be successful.

3.2. There were a number of reasons for the failure of repeated bids:

- The severe recession: this was evident from difficulties experienced not only by similar organisations to ourselves, but also the difficulties faced by professionals working in the heritage sector.
- Criteria for awards became increasingly demanding, and focussed on severely disadvantaged client groups; Moffat is not regarded as a disadvantaged community despite its rurality and high percentage of older people. BLF in particular were very explicit in stating that Moffat is not seen as deprived.
- HLF have changed their criteria for awards from heritage preservation to heritage education, and thus the Hall, especially as a Grade B Listed building, was not seen as high priority.
- Moffat is a very dynamic community; this is a mixed blessing since funders look at Moffat as starting from a relatively high base-line in terms of activities and facilities, and thus not a high priority for funding.
- Throughout the time of the Trust it has become apparent that restoration of a derelict building is more likely to attract funding; prevention from a building becoming derelict is not seen as of equal merit.
- The size of the Project compared with the small size and perceived affluence of the Community and the relative benefits to be gained were indicated as reasons for lack of success.

3.3. The repeated failures of funding applications caused the Trust to review its aims and long-term future. It became clear that only by phasing the overall project significantly was there any chance of obtaining any funding to preserve the building. This decision was supported by national organisations that had seen similar impacts from the recession in other areas [Development Trust Association Scotland and SCVO].

3.4. As a result the Trust recontacted Historic Scotland at the end of September 2011 who were still holding an 'offer in principle' for funding. HS confirmed that they were happy to continue with the application on the basis that:

- The grant would obtain matched funding from D&G Council [as owners of the building]
- The work would secure the building structurally for the future
- There would be community benefit
- The Hall would be subject of a fully repairing lease taken on by the Trust from the Council for a minimum of 21 years
- A fully resourced maintenance plan would be put in place to maintain the exterior of the building.

3.5. The HS grant would refurbish and repair the exterior of the Hall. Some foundation problems would be resolved, stabilising the building, and damaged stonework would be repaired. The roof and lead gutters would be stripped and reinstated to conservation standards, thereby extending the roof for another seventy years. The works would also reinstate the stage [closed as a result of a potential cracked beam above it], which has been a major source of frustration for the Community; and enable the repair of the library ceiling, part of which has recently failed.

3.6. The Trust contacted D&G Council with these proposals. Very positive joint discussions took place during the latter part of the Project time frame. This ultimately led to an agreed paper being presented to Policy and Resource Committee of the Council in February 2011, to consider the options for the future of the building. The Council has agreed to co-finance the repair work, agreeing to provide £378k towards the total project cost of £602k. It has also agreed to lease the Town Hall to the Trust and to put in place long term revenue support to the organisation.

3.7. The lease will give the Trust control of the management and development of the Hall. As a consequence, the opportunity has been taken of developing proposals for a total refurbishment of the kitchen. This was identified as one of the first priorities following community consultation early in the life of the overall Project. Plans and quotations have been obtained, and an offer in principle of funding from the Land Trust has also been received.

3.8. The ultimate aim of the Trust remains to totally refurbish and redevelop the interior of the Hall, but the progress during the Project has enabled a way forward which meets some of the aims of the Trust, and thus the Community it represents.

3.9. A successful application for part funding from the Architectural Heritage Fund will enable the project to continue to its next phase of implementing the HS grant and lease arrangements for the Hall, and to create greater community 'ownership and use of the Hall.

#### **4. Transfer of Ownership**

4.1. The original aim was to progress transfer of ownership of the Hall from the Council to the Trust. However, this was predicated on the ability to draw in the necessary capital to complete redevelopment. As is clear from Section 3 this latter aim has been delayed and modified during the period of the Project. Progress has been made in terms of:

- Contact has been established between the Council and the Trust's Legal Advisers.
- A small amount of funding is available through the Scottish Government [managed via Development Trusts Association Scotland] to progress this further.
- The Trust is in a position to finalise a lease with the Council for management of the Hall.

4.2. The ultimate goal of the Trust remains to take over ownership of the Hall as previously agreed with the Council.

4.3. Aim 3 of the Project, i.e. to develop tender documents for the project has also been delayed. It will take place during the next phase of the overall project.

#### **5. Community Engagement**

5.1. The original aim was to establish a Community User Group to create ownership and help to set direction to the work of managing and developing the Hall. Because of the difficulties in obtaining capital funding, and thus having definite start dates, the Trust decided to defer establishing such a group until a more positive message could be put forward. With the next phase of the project funding now in place, the Trust is in the process of organising a meeting with existing and potential users of the building to establish a User Group. This User Group will work with the Trust to develop arrangements for managing the building.

5.2. Ongoing community engagement has taken place in a wide variety of ways during the Project period. This has included general contact with the local community, and specific areas of progress which has helped to meet the outputs for the Project. Information on the events and other activities which have helped to meet our output targets have been included in the submitted individual claim forms. This has also included publicity undertaken by the Trust through community consultation evenings, events and regular media releases to the local press who have been very supportive towards the Trust. However, there have been some specific areas of work which have increased knowledge and commitment to the work of the Trust, and which has enabled the Project to meet the target group numbers indicated in Section 7.1 of the Application Form. Further breakdown on these is given in Appendix 1.

5.3 Some specific examples which highlight the benefits created are given below [5.4. – 5.6.]; these have focussed especially on partnership working, and developing heritage aspects.

5.4. 'Businesses' and Social Enterprises: A number of meetings have been held with a variety of business and social enterprise groups within Moffat and District where there is common ground, either formally or informally:

- Natural Heritage Groups are keen to see the Hall used to advertise Moffat's superb environment. This has included Solway Heritage, National Trust for Scotland, Borders Forest Trust, Moffat and District Community Nature Reserve. Engagement with the Trust could be in the form of:
  - 'signposting' the various natural heritage sites
  - undertaking remote video capture of wildlife [NTS]
  - having a base in the Hall from which to operate [Borders Forest Trust]
- Tourism is key to Moffat's continued vibrancy. Partnership working with other groups with a key role / interest in this is a major objective for the Trust, and has included:
  - Moffat and District Community Initiative; close working relationships has always existed, however, with a change in emphasis by MDCI towards joint community development this becomes even more vital
  - Moffat Old Academy Group [through Lets Live Local]; frequent joint discussions and joint public meetings have taken place to ensure that developments are complementary and not conflicting
  - Moffat CAN; the ability to support such developments through meetings and joint marketing
  - Moffat Producers' Market; a meeting has taken place with representatives of this very popular and expanding group who use the Hall for their activities. They are keen to expand their services and have a waiting list for stall holders but are constrained by the size and layout of the Hall. The Trust is keen to explore opportunities for further development of their market, and to look at other opportunities for locally grown produce / crafts to be marketed through the Hall
  - Moffat Museum Trust; [see 5.5.]
  - Moffat Academy [see 5.6.]
  - Other businesses have offered support to the Trust in a variety of ways, through volunteering time, skills, or materials.

5.5. Moffat Museum Trust: There is a significant degree of commonality in the heritage aims of the Trust and the Museum. A number of meetings and discussions has led to an awareness and acceptance of that commonality. A practical example of this is an agreement regarding the establishment of a Town Trail, and how that might be promoted through a map for a Heritage Town Trail. This work will now be

progressed during the next phase of the Project, supported by LEADER funding to Moffat Museum.

5.6. Moffat Academy: Curriculum for Excellence requires school students to engage with the local community. The Head Teacher, Mrs Watson, has been very supportive to the Trust. During the period of the Project the Trust has worked with 2 groups of students on a variety of aspects:

- The early history of the Hall and its founding
- Later history, and its use by the Community
- The scientific aspects of the spa water and the hydrotherapy movement
- The use of the Hall by the youth of the Town and what would they like to see.

A number of resources has or will result from this work, including a questionnaire on the use of the Hall distributed to senior secondary students at the Academy.

## **6. SUCCESSES, FRUSTRATIONS AND THE FUTURE**

6.1. A project such as this inevitably results in delays, changes of direction and frustrations. The Trust has faced some difficult times and decisions, significantly affected by the recession, a common theme which has emerged during discussions with other groups nationally. However, the Trust remains committed to its original vision and aims, and this has ultimately led to a real opportunity towards the end of the Project.

6.2. Some of the significant frustrations have been:

- The impact of the recession on funding availability, especially from the large national funders
- The increasing tightening of criteria as a result of this which makes meeting the funders' objectives extremely difficult
- The move away from building preservation, despite the importance of this to community vitality
- The sheer time-scale and volume of work in making applications to these bodies, and the delays built in whilst awaiting decisions from them. Other work cannot take place because of critical decision points within the overall work plan
- Slower progress than would have been liked with community discussions, such as the museum [reliant on infrequent committee meetings], and Moffat Academy [shortage of 'free' time with other demands on students' time].

6.3. Despite this, there have been significant successes in a number of areas:

- A recognition by the Trust that phasing of the overall project was the only practical way forward, and redefining plans along these lines
- Progress with Historic Scotland in confirming and progressing their grant in principle award
- Success with other grant applications
- Positive discussions with D&G Council; this also included being included as one of the national demonstration sites for Asset Transfer, funded by the Scottish Government, and managing through the Development Trusts Association Scotland
- Positive engagement with the youth of Moffat through Moffat Academy, leading to increased knowledge of, and commitment to, the Hall
- Increased community engagement, and especially the recognition of the value and importance of working together. This culminated in the refocusing of Moffat and District Community Initiative to provide an umbrella approach to working with local organisations, especially in marketing Moffat as a tourist centre. The Trust will be central to much of this work
- The increased experience and confidence of the Board in dealing with difficult decisions, and the positive way in which the future can be grasped and managed.

6.4. Following the agreement of the Council and Historic Scotland to fund the refurbishment of the exterior of the Town Hall, work is now underway to secure the implementation of the work. The lease of the Town Hall by the trust will provide a really exciting platform for the Trust to work with the Community during the next phase(s) of the project, with a view to securing the Trust's overall vision and aims. Refurbishment of the Hall will have a major impact on the appearance of the High Street, its impact on the potential for services provided within the Hall, and thus Civic Pride and Community Engagement.

6.5 The progress to date could not have been achieved without the financial support of LEADER which enabled the Trust to employ an experienced project manager with the necessary skills to assist the Trust in securing the necessary finance to refurbish the exterior of the Town Hall.

## 7. FINANCE

7.1. From a beneficiary's perspective the financial claims process is excessively bureaucratic with little empathy with the financial conditions of the types of organisations using this facility.

Our first claim was rejected for being one penny wrong- we had rounded down our final figure whereas it had to be rounded up- how were we to know? We were trying to be totally honourable.

Our fourth claim took over seven weeks to be processed which causes small organisations like ours tremendous cash flow problems.

This cash flow issue is then compounded by the horrendous impact of the final 25% retention monies. Had we not been the beneficiary of an unexpected small legacy we would not have been able to finance ourselves through this process.

7.2. The overall Project kept within budget, as indicated in the summary sheet.

Peter Beck-Samuels,  
Chairman,  
150312

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## APPENDIX 1: TARGET GROUP INFORMATION

<b>3.1 Which of the LEADER target groups are expected to benefit from your project:</b>				
	<b>1. Approved Target</b>	<b>2. Total previous Claim</b>	<b>3. Total for this Claim</b>	<b>4. Total for all Claims</b>
<b>Male age under 25</b>	<b>7</b>			26: 3 in each MA study group + 20 for presentation to senior school
<b>Female age under 25</b>	<b>12</b>			29: 3 in each MA study group + 20 for presentation to senior school; 3 taking part in Burns supper given by MTHRT
<b>Micro businesses</b>	<b>10</b>			Brodies [interior design] Burns supper caterer Moffat Producers Market Moffat Markets National Trust for Scotland Solway Heritage Borders Forest Trust Instock Moffat Initiative Moffat Woollen Mill Chefs for Scotland Annandale Hotel
<b>Social enterprises</b>	<b>2</b>			Moffat CAN; Lets Live Local: both involved in meetings with Trust and presenting at AGM and other public meetings
<b>Over age 60</b>	<b>20</b>			70: engaged in events supporting MTHRT [Senior Citizens Party; Tea Concert; Burns Supper; Ceilidh]; volunteering for coffee morning; involved in public meetings

<b>No of promotions undertaken [&amp; Marketing?]</b>		✓		Achieved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christie Commission</li> <li>• Old Moffat Academy</li> <li>• Burns Supper</li> <li>• Ceilidh</li> <li>• Afternoon Concert [Evergreens]</li> <li>• AGM</li> <li>• Community Council</li> <li>• Grand Prize Draw</li> <li>• Coffee Morning</li> <li>• Regular columns in local press</li> <li>• Use of website</li> </ul>
	<b>2</b>			