

# **Creetown Bowling Club**



## **Open Access Initiative & Refurbishment Programme 2010/11**

In recent years the game of bowls has been less popular particularly amongst young people with falling participation many clubs have been struggling to stay financially viable. The club recognised that in order for the game and the club to continue locally they would need to change, in particular to bridge the generation gap between young and old, increased the membership, broaden participation within the community by encouraging other groups, businesses or individuals to use our facilities. The club had to actively encourage other users into the clubhouse to sustain the viability of the club. It became clear very early in our discussions that a limiting factor was the quality of our facilities; the clubhouse was simply not fit for purpose.

The idea that the club should refurbish the existing clubhouse has been discussed by various committees over the past 10 years. Everyone thought that it was a good idea but nothing was ever done to make the idea a reality. It was only when a few forward thinking individuals with the skill set required to move the ideas forward that progress started to be made during the summer of 2008.

After consulting with the local community and club members the committee agreed that to ensure the viability of the facility the following would need to be a priority.

- Provide a social hub for community access
- Expand the use of the clubs facilities into the general community
- Increase the numbers using the clubs facilities for and beyond our membership
- Improve access to clubhouse.
- Upgrade the club house to make it fit for purpose for the above
- Provide all year all weather usage

- Comply with modern Building, Health, Safety, Disability, Discrimination and Equal Opportunity Law

To get the project started the club commissioned an architect Glynne Shackleton, who produced drawings and a specification to refurbish the clubhouse, which would bring it up to legal standards. Planning permission and the Building Warrant were obtained in December 2008.

At this point the club could establish estimated costs for the project and commence seeking funding support from various sources. To initiate this the club sought advice from The Creetown Initiative through their representative Andy Ward, this was extremely helpful and the club managed to secure funding from two sources.

1. £10,000 from the The Slevin Bequest
2. £5000 from Awards for All

The club also had access to funds of its own of £21,650.78.

At this stage it was obvious that to take the project forward the club would still require a substantial amount of funding from another source, perhaps along with fund raising activities within the club. What seemed to be impossible a few months previous was now looking as if it could be achievable sometime in the future.

The club set a target of raising additional funds and prepared the grant application for funding from Rural Dumfries & Galloway LEADER.

The total estimated cost for the project was £73,301.56 with 50% of the funding £36,650.58 being requested from LEADER. If this amount of funding could be secured the project could go ahead.

The first application to LEADER was sent summer of 2009 with the project planned to commence October 2009, which would allow all the building works to be completed over the winter ready for the 2010 summer season, the optimal time to maximise income from clubhouse usage. Unfortunately the first submission was rejected, as further information was required to support the application. This was a major set back for the planning as the estimated summer income was seen as critical to the clubs priorities. A second application was submitted and approved on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

This delay in starting had implications to the planning, as the work would now have to be undertaken during the summer, the period when the club is used most. Also an unforeseen cost to the project was the increase in Vat from 15% when the application was sent to 17.5% when the application was granted, an increase of £1832.54. It was clear that the clubhouse would need to keep functioning during the building works, although the funding for the project was secured the club would need to function during the building work to support the bowling season, other activities and bring in income for facility maintenance.

The contractor Galloway Windows was consulted and they agreed to carry out the work in stages to allow maximum use of the facilities during the summer.

They were very understanding and supportive of our needs by ensuring that safe access to the facility was available when we needed it.

As the building works progressed the club now focussed on other objectives mainly to increase usage, improve community participation, increase membership and the D&G LEADER issue to "*Forge better links between the generations*". This was done by issuing newsletters, posters encouraging participation by organising open events and promoting the use of the facility to other groups. The most successful of these was the improved relationship with Creetown Football Club. They started to use the facility for their monthly meetings in June 2010, then their AGM, social nights, fund-raising activities including a very successful Burns Night. Most of the football club members are under the age of 30 which helped us establish links with younger people, both clubs now have a good relationship and work jointly to raise funds for both clubs, we share the facility which directly benefits more than a few young people locally. The two clubs have also entered into an agreement to facilitate the football clubs after game meals in the clubhouse, sharing the profits from the bar between the two clubs.

This partnership is likely to continue and is particularly important to the success of the project, as the football club would use the facility mainly during the winter months with the bowling clubs main activity during the summer.

A ladies Dominoes club throughout the year also now uses the facility.

The clubhouse facilities are now used for a range of local events such as birthday parties, bingo, fund raising activities within the village.

During the term of the project the membership increased from 89 to 108 which is almost 10% of the village being club members.

The grant application identified 10 target groups, which would benefit from the project, nine of the identified the targets were exceeded by up to 110%. The social enterprise target was not met, this was partly because the club did not understand the definition of a social enterprise and the opportunity to gather evidence was lost or evidence was not obtained. There may actually have been social enterprise taken place but not captured.

The refurbishment of the clubhouse has been a great success it has been the topic of village talk all summer. It is now fit for purpose. Other community groups are now using the facility as a meeting place, to raise funds and for social events; the membership has increased. For the first time the facility is being used throughout the winter, even although it was unfinished last year. With the facility now being used all year, increased community use and increased membership the club believe that objectives of the project can be sustained, as the financial viability of the club is more secure.

The committee have a range of social activities planned and the community are showing interest in future usage. The committee will continue to explore new ways of expanding the use of the facilities to the general community and beyond. The club now has a Facebook page on the internet which provides information and pictures of club activities etc (see link below).

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=155205294505182>

The total project cost was £1367.52 over budget, which was mainly caused by the unforeseen vat increase between the time the application was submitted and the date approved. The club had always anticipated that there could be an over spend and had arranged a bank overdraft facility. Also during the building works a tight control of spending, and avoiding extras in building works was a clear priority and agreed with the contractor before the work commenced. The contractor Galloway Windows from Newton Stewart was extremely helpful and did not pass any additional labour costs. At the end of the project once the 25% of funding retained by LEADER is received the club should be in credit with the bank.

The LEADER funding has made it possible for Creetown Bowling Club to fulfil its aims and helped the club secure the financial viability by having a fit for purpose facility which is now being used by a more than few young and old within the local community and beyond.

The project has been recognised throughout Scotland as Creetown Bowling club is one of very few clubs in Scotland with increasing membership. Bowls Scotland Bowls the national governing body for outdoor lawn bowls in Scotland has visited the club and have showcased Creetown club on their web site (see link below).

<http://www.bowlsscotland.com/development/club-development/case-studies/creetown-bowling-club>

The club were also asked to give a presentation to one of their club national development seminars in The National Bowling Centre in Ayr on the 17<sup>th</sup> March 2011, where an audience of 70 people from many clubs throughout the west of Scotland were given the background of the club's success. A few clubs have indicated that they would like to come and visit, share ideas and see what Creetown club had done that may help them in the future.

The new season will start on the 17<sup>th</sup> April and the club is looking forward to a busy year ahead. An official opening is planned later in the year to further raise the awareness within the community that the facility is now there to be used by all.