

TAKING ROOT

stories of rural community enterprise from the DTA



Foreword by the Rt Hon Alun Michael MP, minister of state for rural affairs and local environmental quality

DEVELOPMENT trusts have proved themselves to be a most effective form of social enterprise, stimulating action in both urban and rural areas. The growing success of development trusts in rural areas is admirably illustrated in this publication which highlights the achievements of 14 of them. The driving force behind the work of rural development trusts is closely allied to Defra's own aims and objectives for rural enterprise and communities. I am, therefore, pleased to be introducing this publication.

Defra's overarching objective is sustainable development, which means a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come. It involves integrating and balancing social, economic and environmental considerations such as thriving economies and communities in rural areas and a countryside for all to enjoy. One of our key aims, therefore, is to enhance opportunity and tackle social exclusion through promoting sustainable rural areas with a dynamic and inclusive economy, strong rural communities and fair access to services. One of the particular strengths of development trusts is the way they join up activity, using a partnership approach, removing duplication and plugging the gaps in order to address a range of socio-economic, environmental and cultural issues.

One of my main concerns for rural areas is to get to the roots of the problems behind the hidden and dispersed incidence of social exclusion. Social

exclusion has been identified as a major and structurally threatening cost to both Government and society. Rural social exclusion may be tackled in its worst concentrations by area-based programmes.

Rural communities, and especially those beyond the "commuter belt" around larger towns and cities, are facing growing challenges to their economic and social sustainability. Increasingly, rural communities have to take charge of their own affairs in order to cope with these challenges. Rural development trusts help to provide sustainable regeneration which addresses social exclusion through a business approach.

I am sure you will be impressed by these case studies. Individually, they highlight the spirit of co-operation and the importance of good communication needed within a community to think through the special characteristics of that area and how to tackle the problems. As a result, the solutions are innovative. Collectively, they demonstrate the wide variety of ways in which rural communities have addressed the problems facing them and devised effective strategies to tackle them. As such they provide an excellent compilation of good practice which I hope will inspire others. These strategies help them socially, economically and environmentally. This is not only a commendable demonstration of sustainable development in practice but is a route which I believe is essential to the future well being of many rural communities.





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DEVELOPMENT TRUSTS AND THE DTA

DEVELOPMENT trusts can be found all over the UK. They are based in inner cities, on peripheral housing estates, in market and coastal towns, former coal mining areas and rural communities.

Development trusts are community enterprises:

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

The Development Trusts Association (DTA) is the national body for development trusts and works across the UK with nine regional networks in England and sister organisations in Wales and Scotland. There are currently more than 300 trusts in full membership of which approximately one third are working with rural communities.

At the DTA, Charlotte Marwood, National Rural Policy Manager supports the growth of rural membership through linking rural development policy with what is happening on the ground. Policy initiatives from government and other agencies are interpreted and communicated effectively across the development trust network. Similarly, the practical experience, best practice and evidence base held within rural community enterprises are conveyed to government and other bodies to assist and influence future policy decisions.

For further information on the national rural work of the DTA please contact Charlotte Marwood by email c.marwood@dta.org.uk or telephone **01453 519177**.

COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE: A RURAL LANDMARK

by David Atkinson, programme manager for social exclusion at the Countryside Agency

THE Countryside Agency is delighted to be involved in the Development Trusts Association's publication *Taking Root*.

Social and community enterprise is becoming an increasingly cohesive and identifiable area of regeneration policy. The potential of the sector to deliver the triple bottom line of economic prosperity, social returns and environmental benefits continues to grow. Development trusts are, quite rightly, recognised to be at the heart of this movement.

There is emerging evidence that social and community enterprise is already contributing to these outputs in some rural areas, assisting better service delivery, financial inclusion, wealth creation and environmental benefits.

But more than this, we are also starting to see how social and community enterprise is particularly well suited to tackling many of the unique problems experienced by people in the countryside.

On the whole, when we think about social exclusion our minds are drawn to visions of urban deprivation and poverty. The reality is that social exclusion exists in rural areas as well.

Almost a fifth of all rural households live below the poverty threshold. In addition, problems such as low income, poor health, inadequate housing, lack of education and training, no involvement in decision-making and family breakdown all exist in rural areas.

Rural social exclusion can often be masked by surrounding affluence or scattered across large geographical areas. These problems are exacerbated by isolation, which can mean vital public services, shops, public transport, job, training and leisure opportunities are all inaccessible.

As part of the Countryside Agency's rural social exclusion work, we have been looking closely at the role of social and community enterprise and the part it can play in tackling some of these issues.

We have funded the post of National Rural Policy Manager at the DTA to help embed the important rural contribution of development trusts within the sector. This publication is significant because it clearly shows how much development trusts offer in tackling some intractable rural problems and delivering long-lasting opportunity.

In particular, the publication highlights how development trusts are becoming self-financing at the same time as delivering tangible benefits to communities. These communities experience a range of typical rural problems such as seasonal employment, isolation, weak voluntary sector networks, scattered population and decline of the mining industry.

But the impacts of development trusts are varied and far reaching: new business start ups and job creation; better trained and motivated workforce; improved access to and availability of services; better health; improved environment – natural and built; and better use of the countryside.

Whether it is the tourism-driven regeneration of a small fishing community in the north-east or a skills and training based approach in a south-western garrison town, the hallmarks of social and community enterprise are the wider benefits that underpin the infrastructure of rural communities.

We can see a range of individual benefits, but taken as a whole, development trusts are contributing to the engagement and identification of needs. They build strength within the community and harness the skills and expertise that rests there. These are all fundamental to tackling social exclusion and delivering sustainable regeneration in rural areas.

David Atkinson
Programme Manager, Social Inclusion
The Countryside Agency



“THIS ISN’T A PICNIC,”

says Chris Woodcock, chair of the DTA

IF you go down to the woods today – or, for that matter, up into the hillsides or over to that quaint little village or town nestling in the valley – you may find something of a surprise, for there are fabulous beasts to be found roaming your countryside.

These beasts are better known as development trusts. They are proving to be fabulous vehicles for harnessing social and economic change in some of the country’s most challenged communities.

You are probably more aware of such beasts in urban areas, having been showcased in the Development Trusts Association’s publication, *Fabulous Beasts*, which was published two years ago.

But the DTA’s membership includes community enterprises from all over – from the densely populated inner cities to the remote and isolated countryside areas.

One or two such fabulous beasts from rural parts made their way into that earlier publication and are recognised nationally as exemplars of seriously successful rural community enterprises. I refer to the likes of Ibstock Community Enterprises and the Rockingham Forest Development Trust as prime examples.

But in this year’s publication we want to give particular focus to the tremendous range of enterprising rural and semi-rural initiatives, which are underway, right across the country. Many are in some remote and relatively unknown parts of the country.

Development trusts are tackling the issues faced by rural communities across the UK. They often emerge in places with weak local economies, where there are few shops or banks and poor community facilities – and where, while there may be good quality housing available, it is frequently unaffordable to those who need it most.

Read on, and you will be filled with optimism at what local people, living in one of the 300 or so communities now possessing a development trust, are doing.

Whether transforming barren land and buildings into income generating assets, opening up business units or setting up companies to deliver visitor attractions, development trusts are proving themselves as viable and sustainable models of business.

The development trust movement is not about geography or density of population. It is about communities and how the people within them can band together to harness positive change in their local economies; strengthening the capacity of their communities to generate wealth – and keeping it there.

As this publication shows, there is no one-size-fits-all development trust. They take different forms and undertake many different types of enterprising activity. But there are some things they have in common.

At the heart of the development trust movement is the desire of local people to create wealth in their community. They seek out opportunities for enterprise and commit themselves to ensuring that the profits are reinvested back into their community. The aim is to maximise locally relevant social returns.

Others are beginning to recognise this reality. The DTA, through its practitioner-based membership, is now frequently turned to for its expertise in supporting and encouraging community based enterprise and asset development.

I hope community enterprise will be recognised in the mainstream of the government’s approach to the enterprise economy. Already we have won the argument that community enterprises should be able to access high quality advice and support services, just as the government believes the private sector should.

Business Links, and other advice and support services, should be available to our members, in rural just as in urban areas. Supporting community enterprise in all parts of all our regions should be integral to regional development agency economic strategies. It appears we are now being heard and, more importantly, listened to.

As I reach the end of my third and final year as Chair at the Development Trusts Association, I am encouraged the organisation is now recognised as an organisation worth talking and listening to. I hope our voice will be heard ever more closely for years to come.

Chris Woodcock
Chair, Development Trusts Association

KEYSTONE DEVELOPMENT TRUST



“**TREES**, we’ve got millions of them,” exclaims Neil Stott, chief executive of the Thetford-based Keystone Development Trust. “Forestry and wood industries are an important part of our local heritage and economy.”

Stott is optimistic that a proposed Wood Enterprise Centre at Coney Weston, a partnership project with Norfolk timber merchants R.H Wilden & Sons, can

revitalise local wood-related businesses and ensure young people acquire traditional skills.”

A wood carver and joiner are already at the site, enticed by being close to a handy supply of raw materials. Small arts and craft enterprises will be able to rent business start up units. “Older people with traditional woodland skills are retiring so we want to replace them with trained

younger people,” adds Robert Wilden.

Keystone’s board and business development officers understand the harsh economic risks that weigh against the Wood Centre’s future, such as cheaper timber production costs in Europe. “But growing demand for products made from wood suggests the industry has a clear future,” says Stott. “Keystone knows that nothing will be achieved without taking risks.”

The trust – both a business and a charity – balances its projects in rural areas with work in Thetford and Brandon, towns with pockets of significant poverty and deprivation. Spanning chunks of both Norfolk and Suffolk, Keystone’s wide rural patch covers over 50 parishes beset by youth unemployment and poor transport. Keystone’s remit ranges over 650 square miles of heath, forest and farmland and the trust chases the administrative tails of three district councils.

“Anchoring community capital is about creating sustainable jobs and training in socially owned and managed enterprises,” says Stott. Keystone was formed in 2003 around the concept of community capital, defined by Stott as “the people, their skills, all of the buildings, schools and businesses – everything that makes an area tick”.

One such anchor is Keystone’s planned Enterprise Factory in Thetford, secured mainly by £1.75m of European and regional

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KEY FACTS

- The trust has a track record in providing a range of services in Thetford and the surrounding area. These include health, learning and social enterprise support programmes.
- Keystone Development Trust is exploring the idea of forming a catering firm that would focus on historic, traditional recipes and buy supplies from local food producers.
- Keystone has secured £200,000 Connecting Communities funding from the Home Office to boost public service provision for the area’s increasing number of Portuguese migrant workers in the picking, packing and plucking industries.

development agency funding. The Factory will deliver vocational training and offer space for new businesses. Keystone is talking to schools about training potential bricklayers, car mechanics, plumbers and hairdressers. Stott believes that many young people from rural villages will be drawn to take up places at the Factory, which will be run as a social enterprise.

The building will also be home to Keystone's MultiMobile community transport fleet, an innovative range of vehicles that supplement hard-pressed village halls and community centres.

One gleaming vehicle becomes a mobile classroom with networked laptop PCs and a 42" plasma display monitor. At other times, young people in villages use it as a mobile PC games centre. Another vehicle will be turned into a fully equipped play facility for small children run by four play workers.

The fleet is an early indication of Keystone's ambitions over the next four years. It wants to develop at least 20 community projects, five 'break-even' or maybe profitable social enterprises, and to earn a commercial trading income of at least £200,000. Of course, this will be reinvested locally.

Stott is confident Keystone, with its 30 staff can develop profitable businesses and sustainable social enterprises. All these will share another of Keystone's guiding principles – that of engaging people in the villages. "By reaching kids and young people we also gain the trust and interest of their parents," says Stott. "For an organisation like Keystone, that's priceless." ■



MARKET RASEN DEVELOPMENT TRUST

DO not underestimate the importance of the public convenience. Not only can a well placed lavatory seem like a gift from above in times of awkward emergencies, it can also play an important role in harnessing a community-led approach to regeneration.

And so the Market Rasen Development Trust in Lincolnshire set out to prove when it converted an infamous 1960s public convenience into a somewhat more salubrious venue. Paying attention to detail, the Market Rasen public lavatory comes complete with classical music.

But the regeneration of the public loos – the "Comfort Stop" as they are locally known – was a deadly serious affair. They

were a part of the sweeping changes brought about by the development trust since the town fell victim to the decline of agriculture and tourism in the wake of the foot and mouth epidemic.

The trust's members successfully argued on the Single Regeneration Budget's partnership board that such public amenities were vital to the return of tourists to Market Rasen, the Lincolnshire town with 4,000 inhabitants.

Six years ago, Market Rasen was quietly decaying with few signs of life or vitality. Rurally isolated, 20 miles from any main towns or services and difficult to reach because of poor transport, the community

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was depressed as they witnessed the town spiral further into deprivation.

"The place looked scruffy and uncared for, which was mirrored by apathy within the community" says Carol Skye, chair of the trust.

Fifteen empty, boarded up shops fronted the high street, a once proud and idyllic Victorian thoroughfare, diminished by fractured pavements and pockmarked by graceless, 1960s concrete wastebins and lamp posts. Poor signage and a lukewarm welcome resulted in lowest

KEY FACTS

- The trust's members pressed hard for the installation of a £150,000 CCTV project in Market Rasen, a gamble that has paid off with reduced crime levels, faster police responses to incidents and reduced fear of crime among local people.
- Music in the Market, Living Music Festival and the Gardeners' Fair help to instil a sense of local pride in Market Rasen, a town perhaps best known for its horse racing course.
- An Action Plan has been developed after the Trust carried out an audit of Market Rasen's strengths and weaknesses as part of the Market Towns Initiative Healthcheck.

placing in a Tourism Bench Marking Survey. This was hardly fitting for a market town with the best small racecourse in the country.

Since being set up in 1999, the trust has been instrumental in a massive renovation and environmental improvement scheme that has given the town a make-over and returned it to some of its former glory.

Initially, the trust became a partner in the Rural Tourism Development Area Partnership, the SRB management committee, which was responsible for £4.38m to regenerate the market town and its hinterland. As the “community wing” of the partnership, the trust immersed itself in its role of ensuring the SRB funding was used to bring real benefits to people in Market Rasen and its surrounding hamlets.

Since then the trust has involved itself in a complex mix of community enterprises to develop Market Rasen’s tourism, improve rural transport links, nurture small businesses, and tackle drug misuse among young people.

Like any enterprise, the aim has been to make these projects sustainable, to generate money locally and keep it there.

Wheels To Work is one example of the trust’s entrepreneurial approach to harnessing social change. “The days when young people automatically worked on a farm or in food production are over,” explains Skye. “The decline in farm labouring has left many young people excluded from work or training.”

Under Wheels To Work, ten young adults hire mopeds for £5 per week so

that, once fully trained and insured, they can ride to jobs available further afield in such places as the Lincolnshire Wolds.

The trust is also using its entrepreneurial flair to harness a feel good factor in the community by taking over the annual Gardeners’ Fair in the town. The trust, bound by a service level agreement with the local council and armed with 40 volunteers, ran the two-day show last June at a profit. Sponsorship was raised from businesses in the area, including a deal with a local Land Rover dealership to provide a park and ride scheme.

As part of the fair, the trust transformed the market-square into a garden, attracted 6,000 visitors and raised £6,000, ring-fenced for next year’s event. “People walked around the town on revamped footpaths, visited the new shops and rested on the new Georgian-style seats, protected by our four CCTV cameras,” enthuses Skye, confident that these events are helping to weave new economic life into the town’s social fabric.

“Politically, we are more powerful but we know that we face more challenges,” says Skye. The trust recently purchased its Rasen Hub HQ and is developing plans to use the building as training, conference and business incubator facilities. It has so far raised £65,000 from other funding streams to support the project.

Other local buildings, such as the former police station and magistrates court, have caught the trust’s roving, asset-buying eye. “The trust’s experience proves that positive changes occur when local people press for sustainable change,” she adds. ■

ST AIDANS COMMUNITY TRUST

IT all began with a pair of Dalmatians, says St Aidans Community Trust project manager Chris Jones. For the past two years Jones has been one of the central figures behind the reinvention of the empty pub in the village of Rookhope as the focus of community life. His involvement, he says, is down largely to his two dogs.

Jones first came across the Rookhope Inn while walking his Dalmatians around the County Durham village two years ago. At that time, the inn was standing empty and unused, having been forced to shut down following a string of disasters. “First of all there was foot and mouth disease, which hit the area quite hard,” says Jones. “Then the local cement factory, a big employer in the area, closed.”

After stumbling across the empty inn, an excited Jones contacted the owner to try to talk him into selling it. “At first he wasn’t interested, but eventually I managed to persuade him,” says Jones.

In the end the St Aidans Community Trust, a charitable organisation operating in rural communities across County Durham, took on a short-term lease of the property, with an agreement to buy it when funding became available. Guided by the principles of “The Pub is the Hub”, a report by the Countryside

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KEY FACTS

- The St Aidans Community Trust offers three full-time and two part-time jobs to villagers. It also employs the services of around 40 volunteers.
- The trust works as a rural outpost of a nearby college, offering education and training to village residents.
- It will receive a £13,000 grant for three years from the Lankelly Foundation’s Supporting Community Enterprise funding programme. The grant programme is ringfenced for DTA members.
- Seven local residents are Scarman Award winners for their community work.



Agency highlighting the importance of the village pub to rural community life, the trust decided to reopen the Rookhope Inn as exactly this – the focal point for Rookhope’s residents.

Although the 300 year old inn required a total overhaul, the trust began just by giving it a thorough enough clean so it

could reopen. More recently, though, it has been successful in securing funds to buy the £120,000 pub and give it the full refurbishment it really needed.

Having now been open for a year and a half, the Rookhope Inn is more than living up to the hopes of the trust. Not only is it popular for its main purposes –

drinking, eating and sleeping – but it is also home to a “kaleidoscope” of community activities, says Jones.

Among its most successful projects is the College in the Country scheme, under which the inn functions as a rural outpost of the nearby college in Bishop Auckland. The programme offers local residents

training and education courses in a variety of different subjects, with the idea that they will be able to move into further training or even employment.

The inn is also an important resource for Rookhope’s young people, being home to the newly created Youth Forum.

“Before, the kids in the village had no focus,” says Jones. “But we’ve set aside a room in the pub for them where they can come and go as they please.”

Yet the pub is not the limit of the trust’s aspirations. Before taking control of the inn, it was involved in a number of rural regeneration projects around the county. However, the impetus generated by the pub has given it the confidence to be even more ambitious, and it is currently looking at two projects to further improve the quality of life for Rookhope’s residents and create future sources of income.

The first of these is to take over a conference centre near to the village, a scheme Jones says consultants are currently investigating. On an even larger scale, the trust has its eye on a 30 acre brownfield site that has been unused since the decline of the local mining industry. Although heavily contaminated, Jones believes it could be a valuable resource for the community.

“We’re looking into the possibilities of remediation at the moment,” he says. “The plan is possibly to build an eco village on the site. It would bring business and jobs and new economic activity to the area, and get rid of an ugly scar on the landscape.”

It seems some of the best ideas really are generated in the pub. ■

GLENDALE GATEWAY TRUST

JOSEPHINE BUTLER, the 19th century social reformer and women's rights activist, was born in 1828 just six miles from the Northumberland town of Wooler. Her work with destitute women forced into the era's infamous workhouses has given her a rightful place in the history books.

So, what better way to pay tribute to Butler's work than transform a former workhouse, a stone's throw away from her birthplace, into a hub for social and economic change? The positive irony was

not lost on the development trust Glendale Gateway when the opportunity arose to acquire and redevelop Wooler's derelict workhouse five years ago.

"In 1989 the pipes burst and the ceilings caved in and everyone walked away from the building," explains Tom Johnston, the trust's former development manager. "After we were established in 1996, the local authority gave us a 999 year lease on the workhouse and we set about raising the funds to transform the building

into something positive for the community."

It took four years of hard work and a number of grants from a variety of public and private sources totalling £600,000, but the trust was eventually successful in turning the workhouse into what is now the Cheviot Centre. The centre has become the trust's base, an advice centre for local residents, a crèche, a computer training centre, a recreational facility and home to a whole host of other community services.

"We had lots of small, ineffectual village halls in Wooler, but really needed a focal point for community activity," says Johnston.

But just as important is the potential the 2,000 sq ft property has given the trust to generate income. Glendale Gateway, which was set up in 1996, rents out office space to

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KEY FACTS

- The trust has its home in the purpose built Cheviot Centre, a former workhouse, which also generates 68 per cent of its income.
- Glendale is one of the most sparsely populated areas of the country – just 24 people per square mile. The smallest of its 22 parishes has a population of 71.
- Like many rural areas, local residents in Glendale struggle to find suitable housing. The Glendale Gateway Partnership is working with a local housing association to provide affordable homes in the town centre by regenerating derelict properties, which will also include local shops.

agencies including the Northumberland National Park, the local Sure Start programme and the Berwick Family Centre.

The rental income generates 68 per cent of the centre's income. The £84,000 price tag put on the property also allowed the trust to lever in funds against it. "The centre has been vital for us to become self-sufficient," says Johnston. "It is an asset that has given us independence and the chance to become a permanent fixture in the community. We are able to generate a serious income from it."

According to Johnston, the nature of Glendale's geography – 6,000 people living in a 250 sq mile area – was an issue that shaped the trust's work right from word go. "Glendale is one of the most sparsely populated areas of the country. We realised that it would be difficult for us to make any kind of impact outside of the town."

It was with this in mind the trust decided to focus its energy on Wooler itself. It was helped in this task by winning Market Town Initiative status under the Countryside Agency's regeneration programme, meaning it would receive support for making Wooler a service "hub" for the smaller outlying villages where direct intervention was difficult. Johnston himself became market town programme manager, a title he still holds.

The success of the Cheviot Centre has impacted not just on general community life in Wooler and its hinterlands, but on the trust itself. Recently it has become involved in a major project to bring back into use a row of three shops in Wooler's High Street that have been derelict for several years.

In partnership with a local housing association it is planning to develop land

behind the buildings for affordable housing, and to use the buildings themselves for exhibition space.

But the project is not simply about regenerating the town centre and boosting the provision of affordable housing to local people. Like any successful enterprise the initiative was also launched with a view to generating money. Johnston believes the rental income from the properties will bridge the gap in its income. "By the middle of 2005, when the developments are complete, I expect us to be 100 per cent self-sufficient," he says.

According to Johnston the experience gained by the trust in its first project has paid off for this next big endeavour in two ways. "To begin with we didn't really know what we were doing, but now we've got the skills and confidence to try new projects," says Johnston. "But we also had to secure a sizeable loan for this project and I am quite sure we wouldn't have got it unless we'd been able to demonstrate what we're capable of doing."

Through limited intervention the trust has successfully started to change the lives not just of the people in Wooler, but also in the surrounding villages where it is hardest to reach.

"It's important to recognise that market towns are hubs in rural areas," says Johnston. "By investing in the town you can have spin-off benefits for small communities in the wider area."

In 2001, when the centre was opened by HRH the Prince of Wales, the trust decided to install a bust of Josephine Butler. Her place in this former workhouse is no doubt a constant reminder of how the trust continues her work. ■



THE NORTH SUNDERLAND & SEAHOUSES DEVELOPMENT TRUST

DURING the summer months, the 2,500 people who live in the remote harbour village of Seahouses are invaded by an estimated 500,000 holidaymakers. They are attracted by a mix of good old seaside fun, beautiful coastal scenery and a rich heritage.

Summer tourism has taken over fishing and agricultural industries as Seahouses' economic mainstay. As well as drumming up cash and kudos for Seahouses' arcades, B&Bs and fish and chip shops, it also supplies temporary work for the village's young people.

"Tourists really expect to see an old man with a white beard, smoking a pipe

and clutching a lobster pot," says David Brettell, director of the North Sunderland & Seahouses Development Trust. "And thankfully we've got characters like that."

But very few fishing boats operate these days, a far cry from the bustling fishing industry of the 1800s.

After the busy summer, winter jolts Seahouses into a contrasting reality of empty streets and closed arcades, a seasonal downturn that leaves villagers isolated and young people without work.

The Seahouses Youth Drop-in Centre, run by the trust in a former bingo hall, is one of the few winter refuges for bored local teenagers.

“People in North Sunderland and Seahouses were worried about the consequences of young people moving permanently away in search of education and jobs,” explains Brettell. “Left behind was an ageing population cared for by over-stretched social and medical services.”

It was in response to these concerns that the trust unveiled its plans for its most ambitious project to date.

The Northumberland Coast Centre will rise from the site of a disused, fishing ice plant and boat repair shed, offering new opportunities to local people and businesses. With entrepreneurial flair, the trust is looking to extend the length of the visitor season as well as generating a surplus to underpin the trust’s core costs.

The centre, which has already obtained planning permission, will be a state-of-the-art eco-building, housing the tourist information office, a Seahouses visitor attraction, shops, café and offices for local organisations.

Fishermen will enjoy additional harbour space below the building and a 24-bed youth hostel on the top floor will help boost the tourism infrastructure and earn further income for the trust.

The required £4m of funding is almost in place. Some £3m has been raised via European Union funding and from One North East, the regional development agency. An application for the remaining £1m has been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

“The centre will be the trust’s first major asset,” says Brettell. “It will also help us to work more closely with local people.”

The scale of the project is an indication of just how far the trust has come since its

humble beginnings. It was established in 1996 after a Civic Trust study called for a partnership involving local people to deal with a range of social, environmental and economic issues. In 2002, the trust launched a detailed, five pronged, three year action plan as part of the Market Towns Initiative.

After the action plan was launched, work stepped up among the trust’s 50 community members who run a range of projects through a series of working groups.

The result of all this hard work is a sense of confidence and determination that could mean winters in Seahouses will never be the same again. ■

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KEY FACTS

- The trust aims to “develop a diverse, robust economy with a thriving, expanding small business sector”.
- NSSDT received £290,000 worth of investment from the Adventure Capital Fund, a community development loan fund managed by the Scarman Trust, the New Economics Foundation and the Local Investment Fund.
- The trust’s 19-strong management board includes representatives from 12 voluntary and statutory organisations, including the Seahouses Fishermen’s Association, North Sunderland Parish Council and the National Trust.

TRINITY COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

FOR people living in East Lancashire’s Ribble Valley, even a simple trip to the nearest hospital can be a lengthy business. Covering some 200 square miles, Ribble is one of the country’s largest geographical district authority areas. But with a population of just 53,000, isolation is a real problem.

“Getting to and from the hospital is a 40-mile round trip for some communities,” says Geoff Jackson, chief executive of the Trinity Community Partnership, a trust that works in some of East Lancashire’s more remote areas. “It also affects family life if you rely on your parents or partner to drive you around everywhere.”

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the community bus service offered by Trinity to these isolated rural communities is among its most popular, providing around 2,500 passenger journeys every year. In six years, the service’s fleet of buses has grown from one 15-seater mini-bus to two coaches and three mini-buses that now operate both timetabled and “on demand” services to 14 rural communities.

But this is not a charitable exercise. The service is run as an enterprise. Ribble Valley Community Transport’s turnover in the last financial year was £135,000. Of this, 15 per cent was achieved from fare income, 35 per cent from contracts for

local transport services, with the balance coming from grant income.

The aim over the next two years is to increase trading income from 50 per cent to 85 per cent by taking on profitable commercially related contract work, from which the trust would create a surplus for reinvestment into socially orientated rural community transport services. “Grant dependency should be a thing of the past within two years,” says Jackson.

But transport is just one of the many services offered by Trinity. Last year the partnership celebrated its 40th birthday, having begun life in 1963 as a youth club. Over this time, Jackson says, it has evolved and developed in response to the changing needs of the area and now runs around 20 projects, all of them contributing in some way to its social, economic and cultural regeneration.

A registered charity and a company limited by guarantee operating as a social enterprise, the trust has its home in the small market town of Clitheroe. The town was selected for support under the Countryside Agency’s Market Towns Initiative. The trust has had a large part to play in implementing this initiative, having set up the “Clitheroe the Future” group that now runs the scheme out of Trinity’s offices. Ultimately the initiative,

with the help of a grant of £1.2m from the North West Development Agency, is aiming to establish Clitheroe as a sustainable and enterprising market town, the main service centre for the Ribble Valley hinterland.

Trinity's individual activities will all contribute to this goal. Apart from transport, the trust offers a variety of services including childcare, youth work and training for socially excluded groups in subjects ranging from IT to catering. Trinity is on target to build a new £10m arts and social enterprise centre in the next 3 years.

The D@tabase ICT Learning Centre, has been particularly successful. Almost half of the 57 disabled adults to have used the facility in the past two years have moved on to some form of further training or work.

But as with many development trusts, revenue and funding are an ongoing concern for Trinity. While it receives funding for some of its programmes from central government, Jackson says it is determined to become self-sustaining. "We're in the middle of three years of funding from the Home Office and we're looking to the Learning and Skills Council to fund our socially inclusive learning activity, but increasingly funding will have to come from our own income generation," he says.

Jackson is aware the trust will also need to seek out new sources of revenue, such as increasing the trust's asset-base, which will mean continuing to nurture and develop strong partnerships with public and private sector organisations.

He says: "If we relied on charity to run services, we could never be sure the grants would not come to an end causing the service to grind to a halt. By running it as an enterprise we can safeguard its future." ■



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KEY FACTS

- The 41 year-old trust began life as a youth club. Today, it works on around 20 community development projects in the Ribble Valley area.

- The trust runs the town's cinema, which it hopes to upgrade to a new arts centre for the town.
- It provides "Ribble Valley Rider", a bus service reaching 14 communities in the area.

NORTH PENNINES HERITAGE TRUST

CONSERVATION work costs money. One solution is to scratch around statutory agencies and charitable foundations for grants to carry out the work. A more enterprising approach, which also gives conservationists freedom from the rules and whims of those holding the purse strings, is to generate this cash yourself.

Since 1987, North Pennines Heritage Trust has carried out conservation and restoration work on 20 historic sites, ranging from a massive viaduct to lead mines and from tall chimneys to traditional lime kilns.

“However, if we just did conservation work and nothing else, we wouldn’t raise a penny,” says former engineer David Flush, the trust’s managing director since 1993.

The trust is a shining example of how to make costly conservation work for the benefit of the local community, demonstrating how revenue can be recirculated in the local economy.

The trust’s original enthusiastic circle of volunteers were determined to conserve and restore valuable historical features of the North Pennines landscape, once one of Britain’s most productive lead mine areas. It is now host to a rich seam of listed buildings and monuments in need of conservation.

Incorporated as a limited company, the group gained charitable status, rented premises and raised start up funds through

public sector grants from Europe and the UK.

But with five separate trading companies, the trust is currently in a position to take a more enterprising approach to delivering social and environmental dividends to local communities. The North Pennines Heritage Trust is now based at its popular, 200-acre

Nenthead Mines Heritage Centre in Cumbria, an industrial warren of 17 lead mines and 158 mineshafts.

Inbetween conservation projects, the trust’s own direct labour-force carry out commercial building work through North Pennines Building Services.

The trust is also planning to build five



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KEY FACTS

- Occasionally, the trust is given derelict buildings, such as two at Nenthead, which have recently been restored by the trust and let at affordable rents for local people.
- A nine-berth bunkhouse and six small workshops at Nenthead capture further income streams. A second visitor centre is being developed at the conserved Dilston Castle ruin and restored chapel at Corbridge.
- Nenthead Mines Heritage Centre is a scheduled Ancient Monument and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

stilted eco-houses at Nenthead, complete with locally supplied electricity and water, communal heating and high-energy gain insulation panels. The houses will be owned by the trust’s affordable-housing trading company.

“If we get planning permission, I don’t think we’ll have any trouble letting them,” says David.

The trust also owns shares in Nenthead Hydro, a private company set up to operate a 375-Kilowatt hydroelectric generating station. “We will sell the

electricity to the National Grid,” explains David. “The trust will receive a ground rent for our land, half-price electricity, a maintenance contract and a share of the profits worth about £10,000 each year that will go straight into our core budget.”

“Our most profitable company is North Pennines Archaeology Limited, which is making a lot of money,” David says. New rules dictate that all planning applications are assessed by county council archaeologists who can attach a range of archaeological conditions to a successful planning application if there is a reasonable belief that the site has historic value. “We’re getting a lot of work from that. Last year, our 15 archaeologists turned over £250,000.”

The trust has raised well over £4.5m since 1991, money that has gone directly and indirectly into the local economy through wages, purchasing local goods and services.

Expertise provided by the board’s 14 voluntary directors is vital. The board includes a geologist, a chartered surveyor, two university lecturers, and four company directors, all knowing what it takes to successfully conserve and restore historic buildings and how to run profitable private companies.

“Self-sufficiency is our aim,” David emphasises. “Traditionally, voluntary organisations relied on finding yearly grants for their core budgets.

He adds: “After a few years those sources dry up and the organisation finds it almost impossible to continue. Funding the core budget without grants must be an aim for any trust that wants a long term future.” ■

WESTRAY DEVELOPMENT TRUST

“YOUNGER people have moved off Westray,” says Sam Harcus, a fisherman for 15 years and now development officer of the Westray Development Trust. “Fishing offers fewer jobs, especially to young women.”

The Orkney isle of Westray, traditionally known for its fishing and farming industries, has just one whitefish trawler remaining. Once it had boasted seven. Depopulation challenges this small, close knit community. Indeed, some classes at the Westray Community School have only two children.

The race is on to develop solutions to boost the number of opportunities available to people living on the island. The aim is to develop economic and social sustainability by harnessing the rich quality of local resources.

Perhaps nowhere is this reflected better than in the trust’s bid to establish a community enterprise generating electricity from Westray’s winds, tides and cow slurry.

To date, planning permission has been granted for the installation of what is known as an anaerobic waste digester, a gizmo capturing gases from cow slurry and food waste that can be burned to generate electricity. “We’re working out whether we can raise revenue from this electricity or add further value to it,” says

Harcus. “For instance, by using it to recycle plastics.”

Generating revenue from renewable energy sources could also play a vital role in securing the trust’s future sustainability.

A site near an area called Pierowall has been identified for an 850-Kilowatt wind turbine. The organisation’s Renewable Energy sub-group, consisting of local volunteers, is currently looking at plans that would see 51 per cent of shares in the turbine company owned by the trust, with the remainder offered as an investment opportunity to local people.

Renewable energy sources are already working elsewhere on Westray. The parish of Kirk is heated by an efficient, ground-source heat pump and powered by a 6Kw windmill. A similar heat pump warms self-catering holidaymakers at the Kilnman’s Cottage. Young people run their gadgets at the local drop-in centre from electricity generated by a 2Kw wind turbine.

Islanders are also storing their waste vegetable oil to produce biodiesel.

“Farming and fishing will always be very important to people in this part of the world,” says Harcus. “But income from renewable energy sources can make a difference.”

By generating income from renewable energy, the Westray Development Trust can enhance its work on other projects to

tackle the issues facing local people.

Lorna Brown, a youth development worker, funded by the Scottish Executive’s Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP), spearheads the trust’s work with the island’s young people, who cook their own meals, play pool, listen to music, watch TV and chat over coffee at the Höfn, a drop-in haven, which was created after a 1998 youth conference.



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Currently her work is dependent on grants. For example, a three-year grant of £3,700 was received to subsidise boat fares for young people who live on Westray's neighbouring island of Papay.

"Now we are looking for other ways to fund the youth development worker's post," explains Harcus. The SIP funding ends this year.

It seems the renewable energy project could mean fishing around for grants to support Westray's fragile community could well become a thing of the past. ■

KEY FACTS

- Westray is an Orkney isle challenged by the demise of its traditional fishing and farming industries.
- Westray Development Trust, now a limited company with charitable status, has established a care centre at Pierowall for older residents. It provides six beds and has created the equivalent of 14 full time jobs.
- An entrepreneurial approach to harnessing social and economic change has resulted in plans for a renewable energy project that turns gases from cow slurry and food waste into electricity.

THE HAILSHAM TRUST



A FEW years ago, the Hailsham Trust was a small regeneration partnership dependent on grant income redistributed through local community groups to help generate local jobs, regenerate the area and attract new businesses to this small Sussex market town.

That was until Prospect House, one of the most historic buildings in Hailsham, became the trust's prime asset. It was a great opportunity for the partnership to put itself at the centre of the community it was established to help, while earning enough income for it to become a community enterprise in its own right.

"Prospect House is a double whammy," says Carolyn Lambert, chief executive of Hailsham Trust, which replaced the former partnership originally set up to distribute Sure Start funding and Single Regeneration Budget locally during the 1990s. "The trust earns revenue for its work, and serves as a community hub at the same time."

Having bought and refurbished the building last year, the Hailsham Trust now rents out its rooms to local community organisations, small businesses, employment agencies and the local careers service.

The trust became a limited company, so it could earn income from lettings at the centre, creating an income that is beginning to help the trust drive itself towards financial sustainability.

Any profit made from lettings are ploughed back into its work improving the social, economic and environmental fortunes of the local area.

"The building has focused local people's attention on our work and raised our profile," observes Lambert. "The trust

depended on grant funding for 2002-2003 but we're now looking at firmer ways to generate income."

The trust hopes the new centre will push it towards its key target of meeting 20 per cent of its core costs from earned income by March 2005.

Prospects House hosts a local Learning Centre run by Sussex Downs College, offering training and development, as well as an IT café. Local people attend to receive careers advice from Sussex Careers, find a job through the job centre on site, or work with a local community

organisation via the volunteering bureau based there. New and expanding local businesses can gain support from Eastbourne and District Enterprise Agency, one of the newest tenants.

Taking over the funding responsibilities of the old partnership body was no easy task. It had been a successful partnership and so a hard act to follow.

Early projects included an alleyway closure programme that contributed to a 75 per cent fall in recorded crimes.

Today, the trust delivers five, wide-ranging regeneration programmes, worth £2m per year. These include Sure Start and SRB, but also take in a Healthy Living Centre and a Home Zones programme.

Five action groups, each including people from the community, help to run the new company. Its consolidated management structure has brought immediate benefits. "We've been able to streamline the management of our unique delivery structure and lever in resources across the board," says Lambert.

Community enterprise status, trading for profit and re-investing surpluses back into the local community, has added a dynamic zest to Hailsham. "Our dynamism stems from ploughing back earned income into a local community that maintains its strong involvement in our organisation," says Lambert, pointing out that most of the trust's directors are Hailsham residents.

The switch to becoming a community enterprise coincides with the trust's expanded remit to cover the whole of Hailsham and the villages of the area presided over by Wealden District Council.

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"Catapulted into the town centre, we're active in the regeneration of a key part of the town and will make an impact on the surrounding villages," says Lambert. "We want to create jobs for local people and carry on raising our profile."

The Hailsham Trust is a shining example of how the development trust model can be applied as part of an exit strategy from being dependent on public subsidies and grants. By adopting an entrepreneurial approach, it is emerging as an organisation with assets.

These assets will give it a place in the community for years to come. ■

KEY FACTS

- The Hailsham Trust generates income by renting out its rooms to local community organisations, small businesses, employment agencies and the local careers service.
- Seven of the Hailsham Trust's nine directors are local residents.
- The trust is actively involved in plans to establish a Children's Centre in the Hailsham East ward.



PENWITH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST

THE tin mines that once drove the Cornish economy are long gone, but the Penzance-based Penwith Community Development Trust has proved that

harnessing the committed efforts of community workers and volunteers can reap rewards for the famous rural peninsula.



“Rural, coastal and we’ve got the sea on three sides,” says Sue Guard, director of the trust. “This part of Cornwall is almost an island.”

Formed in 1999, the PCDT strives to increase the capacity of voluntary sector groups delivering education, training and health services to some 60,000 people scattered across the towns and villages that are tipped by Land’s End.

The trust emerged as a result of a widespread view that voluntary organisations were not tapping into the range of funding streams available to them. An organisation was required to get them the funding necessary to realise social and economic change.

Pendeen, a village on Cornwall’s northern coast, is one such deprived rural hamlet. Previously a vibrant place, with new housing and a healthy economy, the closure of the local tin mine in the late 1980s with the loss of 300 jobs, heralded increasing poverty, teenage pregnancies and crime.

The trust, aware that government Health Action Zone funding was ring-fenced for the region, decided to channel funds through the Pendeen Community Project. Following a consultation with local people about the services and support they needed, the project was able to lever in more than £200,000 to help address local peoples’ health and social needs.

Guard constantly met with calls for a body to voice the concerns of Cornish voluntary groups when she was setting up the Penwith Volunteer Bureau in the mid-1990s. Interlink, established by volunteers with no resources, grew by

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KEY FACTS

- The Penwith Centre, now the trust’s home in the middle of Penzance, is the refurbished former offices of *The Cornishman* newspaper and has a suite of offices that the trust rents out to several local voluntary groups.
- The trust provided a financial management structure for multi-agency partners that enabled £95,000 of funding for a Drug Awareness Programme to be secured for the area.
- Penwith is one of the 88 poorest wards in England.

word of mouth over three years to include 275 members. “Everything the trust has ever done originated from Penwith Interlink,” explains Guard.

Initially, the group pressed home the need for a community building. The result is the Penwith Centre, now the trust’s home and key asset. It rents space to several local voluntary groups. “People wanted an umbrella group and chose the route of a community development trust,” explains Guard.

It has already more than justified its existence. PCDT called local people to a meeting about the potential benefits of £1.4m of Healthy Living Centre funding, offered by the New Opportunities Fund. “People strongly argued that the money should be spent on services for people, not just on physical buildings,” recalls Guard.

The trust invited community projects to be independently assessed against the funding criteria. Some projects offered help for the young and the elderly and others provided specialist services, such as complementary therapy.

“We presented 21 diverse projects together as one programme,” explains Guard. With the help of the funding, the trust was able to build the capacity of these groups.”

While the trust continues to depend on grants for core funding, Guard is confident the development trust model will enable it to survive long into the future. “We’ve shown that people in the community can make a difference,” she says. ■

TIDWORTH DEVELOPMENT TRUST

LIVING in one of the small towns of Tidworth and Ludgershall, or the other smaller villages on the eastern edge of Salisbury Plain, means living alongside the 4,000 soldiers stationed in the immediate vicinity.

The remoteness of this area poses a significant barrier to employment. Many of the area’s 16,000 civilian residents are the families of young, low paid soldiers.

“Tidworth, Salisbury Plain and soldiers are synonymous and many soldiers’ families don’t appear on the jobless statistics even though they need employment,” says Richard Amery, a former Major and a board member of Tidworth Development Trust.

The trust, a company limited by guarantee, was formed in January 2000 as the exit strategy for the community development work of a Single Regeneration Budget programme. It was also set up to take on the staff of and run the Tidworth Employment Opportunities (TEMPO) project, which was set up in 1991 in a bid tackle the lack of job opportunities and other issues concerning employment and training in the area.

TEMPO has a drop-in centre for information, an advice and training centre, as well as a crèche. One to one guidance sessions are delivered by TEMPO’s manager.

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But TEMPO is also an important source of revenue for the trust, which is contracted to run the programme by the Learning and Skills Council. Steve Lawton, chief executive of the trust, says: "In a few years time we don't want to be dependent on grants. We'd like to increase the amount of mainstream funding we receive from contracts so we can be sustainable."

He admits this is a little way off. "At the moment we receive £32,000 each year from the council to fund our community development workers and other core costs. At the moment, if we didn't receive this grant, the trust would be at risk."

The trust is involved with various partners in the production of an economic development strategy for the area that would bring more jobs and new homes and encourage newcomers to live and work locally. The South West Regional Development Agency is developing a business park near Ludgershall that promises to increase job opportunities locally and this will assist in taking forward the aims of the strategy.

The trust employs two part-time community development workers who strive to mitigate the different, and at times, competing needs and views of people who live in the area's two main towns and those who live in the smaller, outlying villages.

In a bid to encourage the integration of the civilian and military communities, the trust has worked with partners to develop a communications strategy for the area. Part of this work will involve an application to Ofcom for a community radio licence, which will assist in the integration process by delivering local radio across the community area.

The trust also has ambitions to establish a community resource centre in Tidworth to house various organisations, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, the local library, Tidworth College, TEMPO and the trust itself under one roof. The trust is currently looking for around £2m to fund the project.

"The centre will be a real milestone for us in our bid to become self-sufficient," says Lawton. "It will help us generate further income by renting out office space and other facilities." ■

KEY FACTS

- The trust works in partnership with the Market & Coastal Towns Initiative, Kennet Drug & Alcohol Working Group and the European Union LEADER+ 'Sustain the Plain' Project.
- Local businesses and shops in military dominated areas like Tidworth have to vary their stock levels when troop movements occur because soldiers, generally on low pay anyway, remove their spending power when stationed overseas. To assist local business, the trust has facilitated the formation of the Tidworth and District Chamber of Commerce.
- In an army catchment area where the population area is "forever young" childcare is very important. The trust employs a full-time worker to assist the Wiltshire Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. It delivers courses such as Early Years Care Education NVQ (Levels 2&3).

WEST DORSET FOOD AND LAND TRUST



YOU could say that by promoting locally produced food, the West Dorset Food and Land Trust feeds three birds with one crumb.

By championing local produce over food that has travelled from hundreds or even thousands of miles away, the trust is able to increase the income of local



farmers and shop owners. But at the same time it promotes healthy eating among the community it was established to support, and works to increase social inclusion.

Food is at the centre of much of what the trust does. Established as an educational charity to work in the seaside town of Bridport and surrounding areas, the trust turned to one of the area's core

assets – its ability to produce healthy, varied foods – to do its work.

One of its main projects is the Centre for Local Food, which acts as a kind of food-hub from which the regeneration work of the trust is growing.

Tim Crabtree, chair of the trust, says: “Our centre is the first of its kind in the country. It helps to educate people about

their choices over food and keep the food pound within the local economy.”

The centre runs regular workshops in healthy cooking, organic gardening and composting. Managed by the trust, the centre is becoming self-sufficient, earning income from leasing its kitchens and office space to schools, community groups and businesses. At the centre, local enterprises

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KEY FACTS

- The trust is underpinning its educational and promotional work on local food through research into factors inhibiting growth in local food markets. The research is supported by the Countryside Agency.
- The Centre for Local Food, following its £100,000 refurbishment, is now equipped with commercial kitchens, training and office space, an ICT centre and food distribution facilities.
- The trust believes that locally produced, processed and marketed food is important because more of the “food pound” is retained within the local economy, opening up job opportunities.

can also access business support and get information about loans and sources of finance. They can also, of course, get training in food hygiene.

Growing, selling and eating food has helped rebuild the town's economy. In the summer, it receives a steady stream of tourists lured by its arts and crafts industry, as well as its quaint fishing port. Though rope and net making complements the tourism, average pay in the town is low and job security is shaky. But by investing in and promoting local food production, the trust has helped turn the fortunes of the town around. It now bustles with business activity, already supporting 15 independent food retailers.

"These independent retailers are a powerful statement of local peoples' preferences on food," says Neil Judd, the trust's manager for Local Food Links projects. "We have a strong growing commercial food sector in this area and that's what the trust aims to develop."

The trust has run a series of events as part of Bridport's year of Local Food 2004. The Bridport Food Festival is likely to become an annual fixture on the town's calendar, after this June's inaugural event attracted a large influx of people, snapping up meat, fish, fruit and vegetables put on sale by local growers and producers.

"I'm one of many people involved with the trust who are passionate about local food," says Judd, a forester by trade. "The festival helped the Trust to ram home the message that local food is a vital part of Bridport's identity."

The growing vibrancy of the local food sector prompted the Countryside Agency to select Bridport as a Beacon Town. Along with the centre, the trust was acknowledged for its work in developing the Bridport Farmers' Market and for its 'Grow It, Cook It, Eat It' food in the community programme.

The Countryside Agency's Beacon Towns programme sponsored an exchange visit that allowed the trust to receive useful, objective feedback from food producers coming from as far afield as Ghana and Eastern Europe.

The trust believes that local food can nourish a healthy regional economy as well as local children. Its trading arm, Local Food Links, is piloting a "fruit break" scheme in local schools where parents pay 10p for a portion of fruit sourced locally wherever possible. The sound of 350 children munching fruit at break-time demonstrates the trust has identified a sustainable but socially beneficial enterprise opportunity.

For the future the trust will be working with two new sister organisations to develop further social enterprise and asset-based projects – the Wessex Reinvestment Trust is a rural community development finance institution which will provide loans to those bypassed by mainstream financial services.

In addition, the Bridport Community Property Trust will provide the mechanism to develop not just further workspace but also affordable housing for the young people who would otherwise be unable to live and work in market towns like Bridport. ■

PLANED



WHILE most rural development trusts exist to fund projects and make them happen, PLANED in Pembrokeshire might more accurately be described as a process or philosophy.

It is not your typical deliverer of

community development. "Our role is to engage communities in local action," says its co-ordinator Joan Asby. "Communities should have ownership of their projects and the organisations that run them. Communities are part of us."

First established in 2001, PLANED – Pembrokeshire Local Action Network for Enterprise and Development – is a community-owned charity that grew out of a previous organisation, the South Pembrokeshire Partnership for Action with Rural Communities (SPARC).

Set up 15 years ago to promote rural economic regeneration, SPARC's primary function was to build the capacity of communities to take an entrepreneurial approach to their own development. When SPARC's remit was broadened to cover the whole of Pembrokeshire and PLANED was born, the new organisation remained firmly committed to this ethos.

Now in its fourth year, PLANED's philosophy is as strong as ever. The organisation invites communities all over Pembrokeshire to work with it and when the invitation is accepted it undertakes a process aimed at helping each community unlock the latent skills and talents of its own residents.

This usually begins with a "visioning workshop" with local people, the purpose of which is to gain a snapshot of a community by identifying its strengths, weaknesses, resources, heritage, and so on. Information gleaned from this process is used to develop an "entrepreneurship action plan", which will typically start to set out specific projects the community might want to undertake.

During this stage, Asby says, care is taken to involve as broad a cross-section of the community as possible. "We don't work with single groups such as parish councils or voluntary organisations," she says, "because the danger is that if one of these groups wants this or that, the cash

is likely to go to the one that lobbies hardest. If you work with the whole community and produce a plan that everyone is signed up to you know the projects in that plan will be ones that most people want."

In each community, a forum is established to take the plan forward. As well as residents, this will typically contain partners from key local organisations, and might be formed of a number of "sub groups" focusing on priority local issues such as heritage or the environment.

While each project may be very different, the aims are the same: facilitate the development of enterprise opportunities based on local resources and talents. It aims to ensure that as much money as possible earned in the local economy remains in and recirculates within it.

Through its LEADER+ Project, a European Union initiative to boost community enterprise, PLANED works with groups of communities enabling them to work together to encourage a community culture of entrepreneurship.

In the small village of Carew, PLANED's approach is clearly demonstrated. An ambitious scheme was launched to refurbish an old World War II airtower into a visitor attraction capable of generating tourism income in the village. The scheme was not the brainchild of any government quango but of the community itself – a community that, Asby says, a decade ago, would not have had the confidence to undertake such an ambitious task.

"Ten years ago the community was

helped to produce its action plan for Carew, out of which came an interest in heritage," she says. "Over the years, starting with a simple leaflet on local heritage, the community moved on to small restoration schemes, and it now feels it has the confidence to undertake something much bigger like the tower."

For local resident John Brock, there is little doubt the community has the capacity to clear the final few hurdles to

full restoration. The project is near completion.

"Everything seemed to be leaning towards urban areas until PLANED came along and managed to start directing funding back into our rural communities," he says. ■

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KEY FACTS

- Works with rural communities to promote sustainable integrated development around agricultural diversification, heritage, culture, the environment and sustainable tourism.
- PLANED is one of only seven organisations in Wales to be funded with European LEADER+ funding for rural regeneration.



RICCALL REGEN 2000

IN THE mid 1990s, the Yorkshire coalfield village of Riccall was struggling to cope with the needs of the local community. Not because, like many other coalfield villages across the country, the mines had been shut down, but because its pit escaped closure.

With so many other coalfields shut down following the 1984-1985 miners' strike, several thousand miners moved to Selby looking for long-term employment at one of the six super-pits, which had escaped the cull. Between 1981 and 1991, Riccall's population grew by more than a third and its local services came under severe strain.

The outdated Village Institute, which had provided a meeting and activity point for the local community since it was established in the 1920s, was no longer suitable for the diverse needs of a growing Riccall. In 1994 every member of its management group resigned *en mass* and a new focus for village amenities emerged with the new committee.

For Alison Seabrooke, who became the new chair of the Institute and had herself moved from the closed coalfields of

Nottingham, it was a challenging start. A sub-committee was established and another, land-owning, community organisation was approached, with a view to combining resources to provide a new purpose-built facility.

"I was eight months pregnant at the time," Seabrooke recalls. "I'd never seen a funding application form and needed help to fill it in."

She was a fast learner. In just a few short years, Seabrooke and a team of 20 dedicated volunteers have built a community regeneration company, Riccall Regen 2000.

Much of the early development was based on the knowledge gained through managing the old Institute and working with the existing community groups.

These days funding forms are a staple diet for Seabrooke, now the chief executive of the trust, but in the early days, progress was slow. The first fundraising venture, selling refreshments at a music event, raised the grand sum of £20. But at least it was a good start to realising the trust's dream of a new community centre for Riccall.



Three years later, they had raised £25,000 through local events, and received a £5,000 grant from RJB Mining to pay for an architect, with a pledge of a further £20,000 should the project come to fruition. The organisation received £632,000 from the National Lottery in early 1997. Funds were also raised from the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, European Regional Development Fund, Yorkshire Forward and the Riccall Parish Council.

By 1999, the trust had raised £1.5m to

build the Regen Centre, a low-energy community facility through which it now earns an income that is reinvested back into the community. Through the centre, as well as other projects, Riccall Regen 2000 now serves the local population of 2,500 people, as well as many individuals, organisations and agencies both in the wider Selby area, the Yorkshire and Humber region and across the nation.

The two-floor building, with its distinctive glazed drum rotunda and solar

panels, includes the 300-seater Outhwaite Hall that hosts revenue-raising sports events, arts shows and conferences. The 220-capacity Riverside Room is rented for children's activities. Adults attend information technology workshops in the IT suite.

About 30 regulars enjoy a two-course meal at a luncheon club for the over-60s twice each month. The Windmill Nursery, set up with SRB 6 funds, offers full-day care for small babies and toddlers at £27 per day.

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KEY FACTS

- Riccall Regen 2000 won the England category and overall national best practice award in the first Coalfields Regeneration Trust and British Urban Regeneration Association awards.
- The Selby coalfield closes this year. Riccall Regen is considering supplying catering services to new business anticipated to open locally in the near future.
- At the end of Riccall Regen's third year, total income was £430,000. Sixty per cent was income earned by the Centre, 17 per cent came from contracts and 23 per cent in grants.

The Workers' Educational Association, Space Base out-of-school club, and the Riccallish Allsorts drama group were all established as a direct result of Riccall Regen 2000 support and all now operate independently within the Regen Centre.

Riccall Regen was selected by the Department of Education and Skills as one of 11 national pilot neighbourhood learning centres in 2001. It was investment that led the organisation to become a training provider offering computing, languages, basic skills and other taster courses.

It employs 35 full-time, part-time and casual staff and is helped by a network of volunteers. Riccall Regen's board of directors include representatives of local organisations. With local voluntary sector input, and by maintaining its traditional reliance on volunteers, the centre is now regarded as belonging to the community it serves.

The centre generated an income of more than £150,000 in its first year, and is slowly moving towards self sustainability through exploring new business avenues.

Its on site coffee bar, for example, has already branched into a stand-alone enterprise delivering catering to local companies and events. A new business centre in the pipeline, also supported by Riccall Regen 2000, is likely to be another catering customer.

"The organisation has grown organically, massively and rapidly," says Seabrooke.

"Community organisations remain our bread and butter, but we now rely on a strong business approach to develop better staff packages, maintain the centre and achieve financial stability." ■





A lush green field with tall grass and a small stream in the background. The grass is vibrant green and some blades are in sharp focus in the foreground, while the background is slightly blurred. A small stream or ditch is visible on the left side of the image, reflecting light.

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