

Newcastleton and District Community Trust

Newcastleton and District Community Trust represent the catchment of Newcastleton Community Council (population 762) and its neighbour Upper Liddesdale and Hermitage Community Council (population 150) covering a geographic spread of 1,200 square miles.

Located on the Scotland/ England border, they describe themselves as a landlocked island due to their remote rural isolated location, 25 miles from their nearest urban hub in the North - Hawick and the south - Carlisle.

Their nearest neighbour (Langholm) is 10 miles across moorland which is impassable during winter periods. Since the Trust was created in 2015 it has acquired and developed assets ranging from the local playing fields and tennis courts to 750 acres of Holm Hill.

NDCT own circa 1,000 acres of land and assets.

Newcastleton Fuel Express **Community operated fuel pumps**

The first community project completed under the Trust leadership was to purchase a derelict site (2016) to reinstate fuel in the community. Sales of fuel ceased in 2008 during the recession when prices exceeded £1 pr litre. Loss of local fuel had a devastating effect on the local economy with loss of employment and local businesses and a resulting impact on depopulation.

The Scottish Land Fund provided funds to secure the site and a substantial budget was then raised to complete the refurbishment providing an unmanned facility seven days a week. 1p from each litre of fuel dispensed goes towards maintenance of the site, insurances and management, surplus funds are used for wider community activities. Since opening, the village has experienced increased visitor traffic and local spending has been buoyant.

This turnaround resulted in the Trust exploring other ways to regenerate the community to deliver changes to help overcome some of the challenges of living in such a remote, rural community in southern Scotland.

In 2018, following the successful opening of the fuel pumps, the community trust set about working with the existing voluntary community groups to secure their assets; referred to as the leisure assets.

We are locked in our small parcel of land and want to create a better, more sustainable life for our grandchildren, owning land and assets enable us to do that.

*Greg Cuthbert
Chair of Newcastleton and District Community Trust*

NEWCASTLETON UNMANNED FUEL PUMPS AND EV CHARGER – OPENED MARCH 2018



NEWCASTLETON

Leisure assets

Consist of Polysport pavilion, tennis court, playing fields, show fields, riverside, Sawmill Plantation walk, Crow wood, Golf course, allotments, and Head bridge.

Prior to 2019 some of these facilities were leased by community groups from Buccleuch Estates and others had become an integral part of the community landscape; walks and woodlands evolving over generations of usage and nurture.

Built assets, managed by community groups, on lands owned by the estate had been enhanced over time but now some needed significant investment to upgrade them to meet modern standards and to attract increased usage.

Prior to accepting the offer of an asset transfer from the estate, the Trust undertook a community wide consultation to consider needs, opportunity and viability.

Effectively there was no significant risk as the key sites are tenanted and their users/clubs maintain the risk.

Since ownership, walks have been upgraded, new fencing and facilities like handrails and crossings have been added enabling wider community and visitor access.



**NEWCASTLETON GOLF COURSE, PART
OF COMMUNITY BUY-OUT OF HOLM
HILL SEPT 2020**

NEWCASTLETON COMMUNITY HUB, BUNKHOUSE AND LAUNDRY OPENED SUMMER 2022

Buccleuch House

A grade C heritage building now upgraded to provide a Community Centre, Bunkhouse & Laundry opened Feb 2022. The ground floor is home to the Enterprise Learning and outreach work and had already become the established 'go to' place to seek help and support.

This valuable work is sustained by a 3-bedroomed ensuite bunkhouse hosting 14 people on the top floor along with secure bike pods and drying facilities and a commercial laundry in the grounds.

This appeals to bikers, walkers, families and groups of friends who can book a room sleeping 4 or 6. It is designed to provide a warm, clean space where users can relax and unwind after a day outdoors.

Whilst there are communal facilities for cooking and eating, users are encouraged to spend monies locally supporting the hospitality sector and SME's. Previously trustees struggled to attract users to the building and it had fallen into disrepair, it was acquired by the Trust via asset transfer.

Capital funding was secured from Scottish Government's Regeneration Capital Grant program with many other funding partners supporting delivery of the work which allowed renewables to be employed throughout the building and during sunny days it operates at net zero, keeping running costs to a minimum.



NEWCASTLETON LAUNDRY – SOCIAL ENTERPRISE OPENED SUMMER 2022



COMMUNITY WOODLAND PLANTING ON HOLM HILL MARCH 2023

Holm Hill

In 2019 Buccleuch announced the sale of Langholm Moor, the collective name for the lands between the village of Newcastleton and Langholm.

This is more commonly known to villagers as Holm Hill which has been used by the village for grazing and farming since the village was established on the old lands of Copshaw Farm and Holm Farm in 1793 by the Duke of Buccleuch.

NDCT registered their interest and quickly undertook community consultations to establish if the community wanted to own some of the land, initial feedback was hugely positive and NDCT were granted a short time in which to raise funds to make a bid.

The Scottish Land Fund and Scottish Government's Investing in Community Fund granted sums enabling the Trust to undertake a series of valuable feasibility studies.

Following six months of intensive work with consultants a development plan was presented to the community illustrating what might be possible if the community owned the land. There was overwhelming support for the plan; a mix of farming, grazing lands, solar farm, multipurpose visitor pavilion incorporating a dark sky viewing gallery, visitor accommodation, walks and trails.

The hugely intrusive Boosie plantation, a site of Sitka monobloc planting which dominated the community boundary, could be felled and moved to a less intrusive site, freeing the landscape immediately adjacent to many homes, and some of this site once cleared could be considered for new homes.

96% of the community supported the proposals to buy the land and a bid was prepared and accepted by Buccleuch. NDCT took ownership of 750 acres of Holm Hill in Sept 2020.



Since that time Boosie plantation has been three quarters felled and a land management plan created to relocate this to a new place called Coulter Syke.

This site will also incorporate the renewal of old paths with new ones created to link them to the existing core path network. New graded trails for mountain bikes and gravel tracks are included to widen visitor appeal increasing destination appeal for the day/night visitor market which will help drive growth in our local economy.

In addition to the development opportunities the community has incorporated natural flood and environmental improvement measures to mitigate flooding and improve lands; leaky dams will be installed and small tributaries redirected.

Tweed Forum advise this will provide a 4-hour window dispersing waters and reducing flow into the Liddel at times of crisis, which means more homes can be saved in a flood.

Two new woodlands, a community managed woodland close to home in celebration of the Queen Elizabeth's Jubilee as part of the Queens Canopy, and a large riparian woodland planted on steep banking which will help to stop erosion, water run-off, reducing flow. Both woodlands are considered by the community as legacy planting and will be enjoyed for generations to come.

Owning land and assets has provided the community with choices and opportunity it didn't have previously. They are more in control of things that directly impact their lives and can take steps to address challenges which previously they were dependent on others to resolve.

Top Tips:



Ask yourself why you need to own it? What is the risk in owning it? Does your community support the decision to purchase it?



If you tick those boxes, time and investment in undertaking a detailed business case is imperative, do not skip this stage.



As part of this consider an alternative usage for your site/venue? Could it be adapted if your vision needs to change because it is failing? How will you mitigate risk if it does?

