



COMMUNITY*
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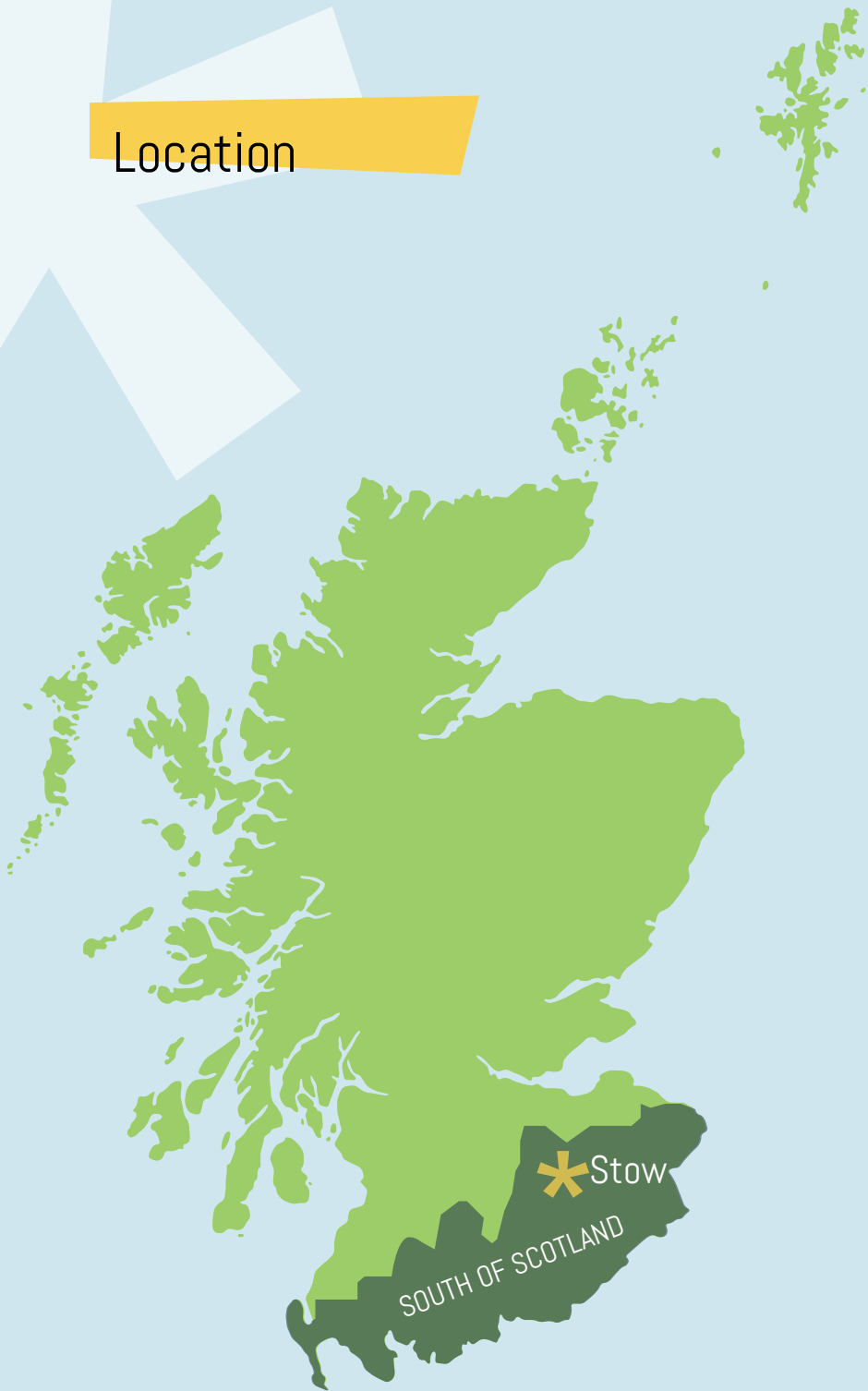
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Case study: Stow Community Trust



Community Ownership Thriving in the South of Scotland

Location



Stow Facts

- The village of Stow, also referred to as Stow of Wedale, has just over 700 residents. The name Stow is an Old English word, meaning 'holy place' or 'meeting place'.
- The church clock had a particular reputation for accuracy and train drivers would set their watches by it on the old Edinburgh to Hawick line.
- Stow Town Hall was built in 1857 in Scottish Baronial style by the local landowner who intended to develop Stow into a holiday town for Edinburgh. The plans never developed however but the grand town hall remains.

Key Points from Stow Community Trust

- Open and extensive community consultation and engagement at all points of project development builds strong community support
- Think long term and think big to tackle issues such as climate change – what can the community do now for future generations

Background

Stow Development Trust was established in 2009 with the aim of bringing together and developing local initiatives that support the common good, whether socially, culturally or economically.

The ethos of the Trust is one of drive and ambition to 'get things done'. Having initially formed to develop a former primary school into a business centre, the Trust have progressed several projects since its formation, with many ambitions in the pipeline. The most significant initiative so far has been the refurbishment and extension of the Station House at Stow Railway Station.



Projects



Station House

Built in 1839 Stow station first opened in 1848 as part of the Waverley route to Carlisle. However, when the station closed in 1969, the station house was converted into a private home. In 2013 with the reconstruction of the Borders Railway, Stow Community Trust realised that the former station building and station master's house would not be included as part of the modern station and was earmarked for demolition to make room for parking spaces.

Having sat empty since 2013, the Trust consulted with the community to explore potential options for the 173 year old building. With no pub in the village and a desire to offer more community space, plans for a quality bar/bistro were developed with community meeting and performance space. Alongside this, the community also agreed that a cycle hub should be included in the plans to address and encourage healthy, sustainable means of travel for the local community and visitors alike.

Whilst the Trust were daunted at the prospect of taking on such a big project, the support and buy in of the community gave them the confidence to go ahead. It was clear from their consultations that the redevelopment would fulfil their aims to:

- Create a sustainable asset for the community
- Establish a successful village pub/kitchen and cycling business
- Refurbish the building as part of celebrating our heritage
- Provide a multi-purpose room for community and wider use
- Create and support local jobs and training opportunities
- Contribute to the social and economic wellbeing of the village and beyond.

As the Station House was such a big, complex project, professional project management resources were sought. This was alongside a very detailed procurement carried out by the Board to source professional services such as architects, quantity surveyors and engineers. Using council procurement processes throughout ensured the Trust were compliant with all appropriate rules and regulations.

Regeneration and renovation began in February 2020 with works completing in summer 2021. The Trust officially opened the building in early September 2021 giving guided tours of the facility.

This wonderful Victorian building is now a central part of community life as well as acting as a gateway to the beautiful surrounding area, promoting tourism and the great outdoors for locals and visitors to Stow.

The Cycle Hub & E-bike scheme

A majority priority for the Trust is to consider ways Stow community can reduce its carbon footprint whilst promoting healthy and viable alternatives to car travel around the area. The aims of the Cycle Hub are to reduce car use, make cycling an accessible activity for all ages and abilities and to create stronger connections between Stow and its neighbouring villages.

The Cycle Hub has produced a number of detailed cycle routes that give users the chance to explore the local region, the hope is that more people will feel comfortable with exploring further thanks to the eBikes. A scheme is already in place for local residents to try out the bikes, either for a 4 week period or just for a day. With an online

“As a board we really wanted to challenge ourselves as leaders and ensure that the community felt they could rely on us to get the job done for the benefit of all”

Helen Corcoran, Vice Chair
Stow Community Trust



booking service and discounts for local residents, it's a simple and affordable way for people to try it out. The eBikes are also being promoted in collaboration with the local health centre too, encouraging anyone who has previously been unsure about cycling due to health conditions to try out an eBike.

The Cycle Hub also includes a bike repair point and secure cycle storage for rail passengers, making Stow a great stopping off point for any cyclist wanting to explore the beautiful Borders countryside as well as locals wishing to commute without using their car. Overall, it took around three years for all the required funding to come together.

Funding

The total cost for the whole redevelopment project was around £824,000, with £106,000 funding from the ScotRail Stations Community Regeneration Fund (SCRF) and additional match funding of over £700,000. Many funders wanted match funding and not all sources could be used for that so this added to the complexity of finding sufficient finance.

A £30,000 grant from the EDF Longpark Wind Farm Community Fund kickstarted the process by funding the initial feasibility study. £9,000 was also granted for new furniture in the community meeting room. Stow Community Trust are grateful to all their funders which includes:

- Borders Railway Blueprint Fund
- Railway Heritage Trust
- Scottish Government Regeneration Capital Fund



Priorities

- Scottish Borders Council/Blueprint
- BCCF Environmental
- SSE Toddleburn Community Fund
- EDF Renewables Longpark Community Fund

Successes

- During the renovations Trust members regularly updated their Facebook page with weekly build progress updates. Providing a photo each week. This regular feature meant that the local community really felt a part of the project and could see work in action, building trust in the Community Trust team.
- Due to the scale of the Station House project and the need to involve the community, the Trust has also been instrumental, along with the community council and other groups in Stow in building strong links and the 'cross-fertilisation' of ideas. Engaging with the community and other groups has increased the sense of community engagement amongst residents and a stronger dialogue between each other.

Challenges

- Taking on such a major project is never easy and a big task for the Trust was dealing with the huge amount of administration involved. All the committee volunteer their time and without funding for a Development Officer, all of the responsibility for the redevelopment was managed by Trust members.

“ One of the most rewarding parts for me is just taking pleasure and enjoying being involved. It’s great fun to be part of something in my local community, even if there are challenges. I’d love to get as many people involved as possible, we’re stronger together! ”

Grace Murray, Vice Chair
Stow Community Trust

- Now that the Station House is complete, the Trust are in the process of seeking a tenant to take on the running of the bar/ bistro and room hire. They are keen to find someone who will align with their values whilst ensuring the building fulfils their aims of being a vibrant and well used facility for locals and tourists.

Future Plans

Now that the Station House project is near completion, the Trust have already got several other projects in their sightline. The next one already underway is a ‘pump track’ in the village which was an idea that came out of the community survey undertaken in 2019. A couple of grants from local windfarm funds enabled the Phase 1 surveys and investigations to take place and it is hoped the project can begin in 2022.

The Trust hope to progress their many other ideas for community ownership initiatives very soon, following further consultations with the village community.

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