



Sedgefield

Development Trust Limited

Community regeneration for Sedgefield, Bradbury, Mordon and Fishburn

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Chairman's Report to Annual General Meeting of Sedgefield Development Trust for 2017

Through the past year the Trustees and their roles have been:

Roger Clubley	Chairman and Trustee
John Fitzpatrick	Company Secretary and Trustee
Mike Ashwell	Treasurer and Trustee
Gloria Wills	Trustee
Melvyn Broadbelt	Trustee
Olwen Downs	Trustee
Sandy Clubley	Trustee
Dawn Seymour	Trustee
Tamzin Lafford	Trustee (elected November 2017)

All are also Board Members and Directors of Sedgefield Development Trust Ltd.

Monthly meetings are also attended by other key supporters: Peter Burnip, Gerard Lyons, Matt Wilson and Clare Midgley. Mel Carr attends regularly as the Town Council representative.

The Trust has had another good year and is financially sound and healthy, indeed perhaps more so than it was 12 months ago.

Looking back over the last year I have been struck by not just how the projects have been generally stable, or have become stronger, but how much the Trust is doing on other matters.

This year I thought I'd change the balance of my report to highlight some of the other things we have been doing and to only give 'headlines' on the projects. However, I'll be

happy to answer questions in case you feel you want to know more about any particular project or activity.

A quick run through the current project 'headlines':

Sedgefield News continues to fill an important part of life in our area as well as give the Trust a firm financial foundation. It is still very dependent on Sandy Clubley but she has good support from Sue Dobson, Tony Magee, Tom Guest and Kelly Aitkin.

Sedgefieldweb has maintained its position as being the place to start when people are searching for "Sedgefield". It is still topping Google searches and its statistics are strong. Matt Wilson's expertise has kept Sedgefieldweb in that position but we could increase our use of the site and enhance our communications particularly for some of our projects.

Days In Days Out (DIDO) has continued well. There was a point when the numbers attending fell a little but that seems to have passed now. DIDO was grateful once again for support from Sedgefield Charities.

Sedgefield Energy Switch has also come through the year well, despite some changes in the national electricity market throwing up different circumstances. There were also some software issues (not SDT's). However, numbers registering for our scheme are still good and savings remain significant. Peter Burnip has shouldered the bulk of the work needed and we are particularly grateful for his continued contribution at a difficult time.

The Farmers Market has continued to grow over the past twelve months. Indeed, in May the number of stalls surpassed the previous record number ever. Also, many of the last twelve months produced larger markets than those the year before. We also have more potential traders seeking us out while we have done less chasing. In the coming year we need to find better ways of storing gazebos and other equipment and to purchase more new gazebos, tables, etc.

Sew Easy has also grown, now having two sessions per week. A particularly satisfying example of volunteers working with other groups was when Sew Easy made the costumes for one of Fishburn Dance and Drama Group's shows.

The Citizen of the Year still attracts many nominations and our latest winner was Angela Bannister. The combined efforts of the Trust, The Town Council and the Rotary Club continue to work well.

Bees of Hardwick had a sound first full year. The apiary is well sited, and the numbers of active hives grew well although we still have a little extra capacity. Some losses were suffered through the year but overall useful amounts of honey were produced and it sold fast. Hopes are high that their second full year may show even better results. The project benefitted from a grant from Durham County Community Foundation. They have received the final report on the apiary project and expressed themselves pleased with the outcomes so far.

Other activity in 2017.

The Trust was asked to help find a way of **providing a free concert**, linked to the Sedgefield Folk Festival, for the benefit of the housebound and elderly who otherwise find it difficult to attend. We had to learn new tricks to do this and after guidance from Tracy Brown, Olwen Downs and Tamzin Lafford set about raising sponsorship for the event. They were very successful, and the Trust is setting out to support a similar event at the next Folk Festival. For the record the show “Life in a Pit Village” was completely full and very much enjoyed.

Another thing we were involved with was **Dave’s Guide to Spending Money**. Actually, this started during the previous year but the Trust’s Energy Switch was featured on the Channel 4 programme on 19th March. I was particularly pleased by the way the Trust and the ‘switchers,’ who enthusiastically got involved, were able to respond quickly to a request which we could not have anticipated or planned for.

At the last AGM I reported how the Trust had moved towards more financial stability and how we have benefitted from new volunteers drawn in by projects which specifically interest them. Throughout the past year we have been talking through **how the we should use our hard-won stability and resources** for the area we benefit. So far, we have made a few small commitments towards possible new initiatives. What is different now is that we are able to do this without always having to say ‘how can this pay for itself?’ Increasingly we can ask ourselves ‘is this worth doing?’ and ‘can we sustain it overall?’

Social Media has been carried through the year by Sandy Clubley, Matt Wilson and recently Tamzin Lafford. However, this is an area generally where the Trust could benefit from some extra volunteer input particularly from someone who has useful experience in the field.

As well as our open discussion following the last AGM we put on a “**Discovery Event**” in the Parish Hall as part of our efforts to inform and be open to what people in our area of benefit want to see happen. Caroline Found came and gave all present insight into her work with volunteers tackling environmental projects. We also had a presentation from Susan Hepworth on the Bright Water project for the valley of the river Skerne. Both these events fed into the idea that Janet Todd, the NETPark Manager, had raised at a previous open meeting. This was taken forward with input also from The Woodland Trust and has led to one of our two new projects. Both of which are just starting.

Our **Woodland & Wildlife** project will start on site on Saturday 24th February at 11.00 am, weather permitting. That will be a familiarising session so that volunteers can walk the site of the woodland, hedging and wild flower planting project. It will also be a chance to meet other volunteers, finalise arrangements and answer any questions. The Woodland Trust has agreed to supply 840 trees as whips for planting two to three weeks later.

Our other new project got started in January, it is **Homework Help**. The Trust has been able to bring pupils who are open to getting a bit more help and insight in doing their

homework together with adults who are willing and able give that assistance. So far, the sessions are being held in the Sedgefield Library. There is potential for the scheme to grow if the need is there and the willing help can be identified. That may lead to a larger venue being used or simply more sessions. Although still very new the project is going well, and I want to thank Tamzin Lafford for running with this initiative.

Before leaving the subject of other things we have been doing I want to add that from previous open nights we are still working up a couple of other ideas which could also mature into full projects. We will also stay on after tonight's formal meeting is closed to hear any ideas and suggestions people wish to put to us.

I understand that some of you particularly want to know more about the Woodland & Wildlife project and I hope to satisfy all your need to know. I should also mention that two or three people, who could not be here, are hurrying to be with us just as soon as they can get away from another place, because they wish to discuss a possible new project which would be very different from anything we have done so far.

The year ahead.

The Trust has succeeded in doing more than ever over the last year and yet has consolidated its financial position. I have mentioned before that the other invaluable resource we need to do anything: the capacity of our volunteers. In the past as each new project comes forward we have been found by new willing helpers. That is a testimony to the community in the area we serve.

Looking ahead the we do need that to continue. I hope to see enthusiastic Woodland & Wildlife volunteers taking responsibility and articulating their ideas about how we can improve the habitats, encourage the wildlife living in them and increase the enjoyment for local residents visiting it..

I would like to say a big thank-you to the Trustees, the others who help at executive management meetings and indeed all our volunteers. I have mentioned some earlier but all have been good supporters of Sedgefield Development Trust. May I however mention Melvyn Broadbelt; Mel has been a trustee for several years and has helped in many ways. He is now struggling to overcome more than one challenge to his health and I would like to say to Mel from this meeting: good health and we hope to see you fully well soon.

Finally, one other thought. Some of us have been exceptionally busy as Trustees and inevitably will need to do a little less some time in the future. If we can plan to manage that transition the Trust can go on playing an important role in all the villages we serve.

Thank you.

Roger Clubley.

12th February 2018

