



# Sedgefield

## Development Trust Limited

Community regeneration for Sedgefield, Bradbury, Mordon and Fishburn

7 Melgrove Way, Sedgefield, Stockton on Tees, TS21 2JN  
Tel: 01740 621431 email: sedgefielddevelopmenttrust@hotmail.co.uk

### **Chairman's Report to Annual General Meeting of Sedgefield Development Trust for 2016**

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

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 more recently Tamzin Lafford. 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.

Last year we reported how the switch to Paypal invoicing for adverts in Sedgefield News had reduced outstanding debts and increased our own funds. That process has continued very satisfactorily as the Treasure will explain but the Trust has moved into a phase where, cautiously, we need to develop a new approach.

For some time SDT had a more constraining cash flow. We learnt the hazards of committing to employees, and of being closely involved with central government and the County Council in delivering projects. Political priorities change and charities can be left solely responsible. These were hard lessons that made us cautious, and our recovery from them was slow and, but within

the Trust's control. It would be wrong to suggest we now need not be careful, we still need to be so, BUT we are approaching a point where we can afford to be a little more confident and look at how we may increase benefits to our local area – the “area of benefit”.

In the last few years the AGM and our Open Evenings have thrown up ideas for projects and activities. Some of these have been ‘incubated’ and are either growing or showing promise, but the Trust does need to find a few extra volunteers with particular skills and enthusiasm. I’ll come back to that later.

Nevertheless I am sure our ‘glass is more than half full’ and not the other way round: we have a comfortable financial situation, several successful projects and a large volunteer base, particularly around the distribution of Sedgefield News.

## **Project Reports**

### **Sedgefield News**

The News team has developed in skill and responsibility over the year enabling overall editor, Sandy Clubley, to reduce her input a little. For a while graphic designer, Graham Ryan stepped in to help with layout and taking the paper to print, but the work was too time consuming for his involvement to continue at the time, so Sandy is again doing that aspect. We are grateful for Graham’s work and hope that he will return at the end of his university course. Meanwhile the team needs to continue to develop so that more people can reliably take the News to print.

Of course, volunteers on the team have to be able to miss an edition - for holidays, work, illness etc., so they need to be able to share most aspects of the work when necessary. The confidence to do that is growing and will increase with time.

A notable aspect of the year has been Chris Ferguson’s photographic offerings, which have lifted the Sedgefield News Facebook presence considerably. Also, occasional photos from Chris, Jonathan Clegg and others make a big difference to the quality of the paper.

The Trust is very grateful to current team members Sue Dobson, Tony Magee, Tom Guest, Kelly Aitkin, Jake Graham, Chris Lines, Chris Ferguson and Sandy Clubley – and to Mike Ashwell, whose invaluable help on invoicing has been a great help to Sandy.

The Facebook and Twitter feeds continue to be looked after by Sandy, with help on the News from Chris, as mentioned and with the Farmers’ Market from Dawn. They take up a surprising amount of time and a new volunteer with skills in this area would be very welcome.

### **SedgefieldWeb**

Thanks to Matt Wilson, the Trust’s website, [www.sedgefieldweb.co.uk](http://www.sedgefieldweb.co.uk) is always up to date, relevant and on top of the heap! Matt revised the site comprehensively in the autumn and the new look site with extra functionality has been significantly more visited.

Overall traffic to the site is up, the number of unique visitors to the site is strongly up, the average time spent by site visitors has more than doubled and people are looking at more pages. The advert numbers are also beginning to rise.

The site has consistently been the top site for Sedgefield searches and we are indebted to Matt for his hard work.

### **Days In Days Out (DIDO)**

DIDO is now in its 10th year, and we have a reasonable turnout every month of between 40 and 50, although sadly we have lost some members due to natural causes, not the fact that they do not enjoy what we do. We need to become better known and come up with ideas to do that.

We also have a vibrant line-dancing group with as many as 15 members regularly meeting at least once every two weeks. We have also been joined by members from Stillington this year as there are no equivalent projects in their area.

This project, and Sew Easy (below) have again benefitted so much from Gloria Wills' commitment and energies.

### **Sedgefield Energy Switch**

The Trust Energy Switch has now run for two year and a half years and the rewards for those registering continue to amaze. The last auction was in October and savings still averaged over £150 for those who switched to the winning energy supplier; by the way the next auction is tomorrow!

So far participants in Sedgefield Energy Switch, mainly residents of Sedgefield, Fishburn, Bradbury and Mordon with a few from further afield, have saved themselves (cumulatively) more than £113,000. With energy prices again nudging upwards we think that there are more savings to be gained in the coming auction and beyond.

The Trust's Energy Switch project has attracted attention from programme makers acting for Channel 4. They visited us just before Christmas and interviewed people who have benefitted, asked us about the scheme and (we think) went away with a good impression. The programme is expected to be broadcast sometime soon. Details will be made available as soon as we know them, and then we'll know what they made of our efforts!

I want again to give, publically, enormous thanks to Peter Burnip, who has led this project for the Trust. Peter has done so much to help people in our community; his energy and dedication to helping is truly outstanding.

### **Farmers Market**

The past year for Sedgefield Farmers Market has been one of consolidation with stall numbers slightly up and the range of produce quite stable. One surprise was that we lost the May Day Market once again. Having not had to call any Market off for bad weather for a long time – and we have had bad weather – this was the second time in a row that the 'special' May Day Market was completely washed out; and again the children of Sedgefield Rectory Row primary school had practiced to perform and could not.

The Market is greatly assisted by strong and enthusiastic volunteers to erect and take down stalls and we are indebted to them; thanks to Gerard Lyons and all the team. The markets have again given opportunities to a wide range of charity stalls and for the greater part of the year we are also fortunate to have music and games equipment for children, both of which add much to the market atmosphere. Thanks are due to Olwen Downs for ensuring that aspect works so well. I must also say a special thank you to the musicians who voluntarily give so much.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of Neil Edmundson who from the beginning of SDT taking responsibility for the Market has provided eye catching graphics and is responsible for our clear identity. Neil contributes this as a volunteer and we are very grateful.

The Markets earn money from stall pitches and gazebos and spending is mainly on publicity, although this last year there was a significant amount spent on safety (weights). Overall it runs at a level which covers costs year on year, but with improved reach from social media has the potential to build its customer and stall numbers. However, we do need to find the right person to grow into the role of market organiser.

During the coming year the Trust hopes to undertake some market research to better understand how to grow the Market to the next level.

### **Sew Easy**

Our sewing group is still very enthusiastic but we could do with a couple more members. Probably the fact that we meet on an evening and meetings are held upstairs puts some people off. The Trust is therefore thinking about having alternate days each fortnight so that we can accommodate everyone.

We have booked the Community stall at the Market to showcase what the members have been making and also to encourage more people to join the group.

### **Citizen of the year**

The Trust works with Sedgefield Town Council and Sedgefield Rotary Club to organise this annual award. The winner for 2016 was Walter Howell, another well-deserved winner with a very long record of commitment to community service in Sedgefield, but we are also keen to promote the idea that younger people can be nominated for their efforts. The nomination forms for Citizen of the Year 2017 will be in March's Sedgefield News, so look out for them.

### **Bee Keeper Group**

The bee keeping group, who were just established and newly trained at this time last year, have made good progress; a good secure site for the apiary was found and worked well for the second part of the season. Some group members moved their own hives in and the colonies settled down to provide some honey later in the year. County Durham Community Foundation provided a grant for the establishment of three Trust-owned hives plus some necessary ancillary equipment. The hives have been assembled and the group patiently awaits the delivery of fresh bee colonies and the start of the new season. Perhaps this year will yield more honey from both individually owned and Trust owned hives and some sales for the "Busy Bees at Hardwick".

For the future, the Bee keepers will take a stall at the Farmers Market later in the year to raise interest and perhaps to sell honey? The Trust has agreed to organise another training course if there is sufficient interest, and if the apiary gets much busier we will need to seek a second site at least. We have already flagged up the potential need with a land owner.

Thank you to all the bee keepers.

### **The year ahead**

As I pointed out at the beginning the Trust is at a point where it can afford to be a little more confident of its funds and can contemplate taking on new projects, or doing more of what is already established.

Ideas for new activities often come up when we meet like this. Funding them always has to be a consideration but often the greatest constraint is volunteer time, or more accurately, time from more volunteers. Our volunteers do a lot and we are what they make us, but to do more is partly dependent upon drawing in some more people, particularly those with interests and skills that are relevant to what do now or wish to do in the future. We would be glad to hear of people who might help with social media, with managing the farmers' market, with erecting and dismantling market stalls, with delivering Sedgefield News in some areas, etc. etc. Some roles involve considerable effort and others happily fit into an hour per month - so please, pass it on or let us know who we might approach for help.

After tonight's formalities are over, we will be happy to hear your ideas for future directions but I do want to mention one previously suggested idea which is showing some serious potential: it is 'tree planting', or as we can now more accurately describe it, creating a wildlife area which the Trust's volunteers could help plant and manage. We have had encouraging contacts with a local land owner, the Woodland Trust and the Bright Water initiative, so this idea could turn into a new project for us and one that offers a very different kind of volunteer experience.

Finally, thank you to all fellow Trustees and helpers; you make the Trust.

Roger Clubley, Chairman

13<sup>th</sup> February 2017