

Norham Development Trust - May 2024

What is Norham Development Trust?

Norham Development Trust Ltd. (N.D.T.) is a not for profit limited company whose aim is: To promote for the public benefit, regeneration in the village of Norham and the surrounding areas through a range of activity, including (though not exclusively), supporting community services and facilities, the preservation of buildings or sites and the provision of recreational facilities.

N.D.T. currently has four directors:

George Straughen (Retired Plumber) Chairman & Chair of Norham Parish Council
Jim Greenwood (Chartered Accountant) Director & Vice Chair of Norham Parish Council
William Jackson (Farmer) Director, Church Warden & member of the Parochial Church Council
Janet Young (Retired Doctor) Director & Chair of Norham Village Hall Committee

A Brief History

In 2016 Norham Parish Council (N.P.C.) was approached by Norham Parish Church suggesting they would like to become more involved in the community. Informal meetings were held about the role of the Church in the community which led to discussions about a wider shared vision for the village. It was agreed that these discussions should be expanded to take in views of other groups & organisations involved in village life.

The Regeneration Team at Northumberland County Council (N.C.C.) were asked if they could help. The team suggested holding an open meeting to define a vision & develop a plan for the village over the next few years. A well attended meeting was held in the village hall in July 2017 which highlighted what was already happening in the village. The meeting tried to coordinate initiatives which were underway & fill any gaps in their provision that the community would like to see filled.

The Parish Council re-stated their aim of supporting & retaining existing services, shops etc. The Church asked how they could be more integrated into the community.

To widen the debate the meeting was split into several groups which discussed all aspects of village life to understand the aspirations & needs of people in the village. With much enthusiasm the various groups discussed wide ranging topics & reported back to the regeneration team who would use this as a template for a follow-up meeting.

In October 2017 the follow-up meeting was also very well attended and tasked with identifying projects, individuals or organisations who would like to be involved & play a part in making things happen, either through existing organisations or new working groups.

In addressing issues & opportunities, a recurring subject was the need to improve communication & coordination between village groups & organisations.

The need to promote Norham as a good place to live, work & visit was seen as vital if we want to have a sustainable community.

As well as existing organisations, several new groups were suggested & those attending were asked to sign up for any group they would like to join. This resulted in various groups being formed – Village Clean Up, Norham in Bloom, Art, Natural Environment & Village Website.

It was decided that each group should have representatives, who, along with representatives from existing groups & organisations, would meet regularly to maintain communication, provide assistance, share ideas and coordinate & promote events within the community.

This structure was agreed to be the best for developing village aspirations & carried forward to the next public meeting.

In January 2018, at a third meeting facilitated by the N.C.C. Regeneration Team, it was agreed that this coordination group would meet monthly to provide communication between groups & with the community. Each group would report on aspirations & achievements & on what resources & funding they needed. Groups would seek their own funding for smaller projects, but a separate body, working with the coordination group, was needed to identify where coordinated funding applications between groups might be in the best village interest. At this meeting, George Straughen was nominated, seconded & adopted to lead this body.

As many of the issues raised at these community meetings, including improved services for residents & visitors, fell into their remit, it was vital that N.P.C. be represented.

Any larger projects, especially those requiring funding, would probably involve the Parish Church, Norham Castle & the Village Hall, so it was agreed they should also be represented. With the further help of N.C.C. Regeneration Team this body was formalised & an application made for charitable status. This application was turned down because regeneration was not in itself deemed to be a charitable objective. So, the name of Norham Development Trust was adopted & a not for profit limited company was registered in February 2019.

What Has Been Achieved

Since the coordination group, which includes Norham Development Trust, was established monthly meetings have continued. Norham History Society has joined the group & the meetings provide a useful platform for sharing ideas, planning events & discussing how groups & organisations can work together.

With thanks to the Regeneration Team at N.C.C. for their assistance, since setting up the coordination group & N.D.T. many things have been achieved within the community, including:

- Major clearing of pavements & verges, as well as several litter picks by the Clean Up Group
- Floral displays, planters etc. established & cared for by Norham in Bloom
- Norham Community Orchard planted & cared for by the Natural Environment Group
- Several exhibitions & displays, workshops etc. by Norham Art Group
- A number of events at Norham Castle ranging from bat walks to re-enactments & a closer relationship has been forged between Friends of Norham Castle & English Heritage.
- As well as continuing to be a place of worship, Norham Parish Church has held successful film nights, concerts, plays & performances.
- Norham Village Hall remains the hub of village life being used for all kinds of meetings & events. The committee is currently working on plans to improve the hall which will make it an even greater asset to the community.

Where We Are Now

- N.D.T. provide support & resources to groups & organisations.
- N.D.T. is working with Destination Tweed which is part of The Borderland Project to enhance & promote the area as a place to live & visit.
- Since early 2021 N.D.T. in conjunction with N.P.C. has been looking at the feasibility & possibility of establishing a Community Renewable Energy Project. With various sources of grant funding, N.D.T. has been able to engage the services of Greencat Renewables, who identified a site close to Norham for a 1Mw wind turbine & a 9Mw solar array. An exclusivity agreement has been signed with the landowner & the offer of a grid connection from Scottish Power Energy Networks has been accepted. A wide range of surveys are being carried out prior to any planning application being made.

To date there have been four public consultation events held in the village hall which have all been well attended & provoked lively debate. If community support can be demonstrated it would carry great weight with the planning authority.

- N.D.T. is working with Norham Parish Church to refurbish No.1 Tower Cottages. The cottage was left to the Church by Mr. Bill Mills & it is hoped that when the works are complete it will be available to let at an affordable rent.
- N.D.T. has recently undertaken to produce & distribute the Norham Newsround. This monthly publication is a valuable source of information for many people in the village & N.D.T. is pleased to help with its continuing success.
- N.D.T. is currently seeking funding to engage professional help to sort problems with, and improve, the village web-site.