

Sedbergh is the largest town in the Yorkshire Dales National Park with a population of 3,000 and serving another 1,000 in the district. It is somewhat isolated with poor public transport, and recently lost its last two banks. It has a confused identity being in the Yorkshire Dales, the South Lakeland District, part of Cumbria, has a Lancaster post code, and until recently was in the diocese of Bradford (now Carlisle). Sedbergh has thus developed a great spirit of self-help.

Background

Sedbergh People's Hall is the only public building in the town that doesn't belong to a church, school or public authority. It serves as a community hub for dances, plays, meetings, talks, polling station, blood donor sessions, WIs, flower shows, sports events, Zumba, and church services. The hall has a recreation field alongside it and changing facilities beneath it.

The Project

The redevelopment project started on the occasion of the Hall's 50th birthday celebrations in 2006. The Management Committee decided to mark the occasion by refurbishing the front of the Hall including some very poor toilet facilities. Plans were drawn up by a local architectural practice, Garsdale Design Limited (GDL). For various reasons the project did not attract interest.

In 2009 more extensive and over ambitious plans were drawn up including not only new toilet facilities, but a wedding room, a band practice room, a gym and a youth centre. Raising the estimated £1.5M needed for such a plan was felt to be impossible, however the Hall managed to gather £30,000 into its redevelopment reserves.

The breakthrough came in September 2011 when the Chairman, Mr Steve Longlands visited the Secretary, Dr Gina Barney, and said "*How about extending the 1985 kitchen block forward towards Howgill Lane and put some sports changing rooms underneath?*". Plans for this simpler approach were then drawn up by Mrs Barbara Hartley of GDL.



Excavating for Stage One Extension

What has been achieved?

Stage One (2013)

Sedbergh Wanderers Football Club were in very cramped conditions and an approach to the Football Foundation's Football Stadia Improvement Fund gathered just under £50,000 for new 'home' and refurbished 'away' changing rooms. Other funding was secured to meet £165,000 project cost.

This stage of the project was not without difficulties. During excavation for the lower floor, the 1956 foundations were found to be either very thin or non-existent. 14 pins had to be inserted with a total of 85 metres of piling to ensure the main hall remained intact. It did, with only a small five millimetre crack in the ceiling. The new toilets and changing rooms opened in October 2013.

Stage Two (2014)

This then left a very dismal front entrance. The 2013 plans included planning permission for improvements, costing around £65,000. Funding was found and work completed in November 2014.



Refurbished entrance to Sedbergh People's Hall



Hall entrance prior to refurbishment

What has been achieved? (cont.)

Again there were unexpected problems. One corner of the building had subsided three inches into the car park. This was fixed by the method of adding an outer block leaf to the building and strengthening the wooden structure by a factor of four.

Stage Three (2015)

In 2012 the Community Gym approached the Hall Management Committee looking for new premises. This resulted in plans to build an annexe on the back of the Hall for the 'People's Gym and Fitness Centre'.

Most of the funding for the £86,000 project is currently in place, with the remaining £10,000 covered by pledges. The Gym will open in summer 2015. Again there were problems to overcome including a rain water culvert that crossed the floor slab and a foul drain (from around 1956) which hardly worked. Both these issues were solved by diversions and newly laid pipe work.

The Learning

We started too big - by splitting down the project into smaller parts we succeeded. This approach also worked well when fundraising locally, as evidenced by the some £50,000 raised from private donors.

We used the talent and skills in the Town. Most communities have people who can meet the needs, the difficulty is finding them and then engaging them.

Where we had a shortfall in funding we obtained pledges from the community to cover it and found people gave further financial support when progress could be seen. We have raised and found over £300,000 over three years.

There is still a bit to do such as: repairing and insulating the remaining parts of the building, putting in a heating system, refurbishing the stage. Work never stops!

Funders included: Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation; Big Lottery - Awards for All; Football Foundation's Football Stadia Improvement Fund; Frieda Scott Charitable Trust; Sport England's Inspired Facilities; The Garfield Weston Foundation; The Hadfield Trust; The Harold and Alice Bridges Charity; Yorkshire Dales National Park Sustainable Development Fund, Sedbergh Parish Council, plus local funding sources in Sedbergh and generous local donors.

Contact Details

For more information about Sedbergh People's Hall visit their website here: www.sedberghpeopleshall.org and the blog: www.sedberghpeopleshall.blogspot.co.uk/

ACT champions community and rural issues

ACTION with Communities in Cumbria, Offices O - Q Skirsgill Business Park, Penrith, Cumbria CA11 0FA
T: 01228 817224 | www.cumbriaaction.org.uk | info@cumbriaaction.org.uk | Follow us @ACTCumbria
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