

Dalton-in-Furness pre-dates its larger neighbour Barrow-in-Furness as the ancient capital of the Furness Peninsula. With a current population of close to 8,500, Dalton has a Post Office, high street banks and a railway station.

It has become known as the Christmas Capital of Furness and has a full programme of community festivals and events throughout the year.

Background

The Dalton Community Association is led by a team of volunteer trustees who operate the large community building known as the Drill Hall in the centre of the town. The trustees are determined to develop a sustainable future for the Dalton Community Association, the user groups and the building.

Originally opened in 1929, the hall was on the verge of closure in 2009. The building needed significant and urgent works to bring facilities up to date. Without the hall, the only large public venue of its kind in the town, it was felt that many community groups would cease to exist.

Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council, Cumbria County Council and the three Town / Parish Councils jointly fund a Rural Projects Officer to develop projects in the area.

The trustees and the Rural Projects Officer have worked incredibly hard to bring the building back into use, carry out significant renovations, source funding, and attract new users.

As the hall was on a long term lease from Cumbria County Council, the trustees felt that a Community Asset Transfer was the best option to secure the future of the building and the Community Association.

The Community Asset Transfer process allows the Council to transfer properties for community benefit without seeking a market price for purchase.



Dalton Drill Hall

The Project

Cumbria County Council was in the process of reviewing its property and land portfolio throughout Cumbria. This, together with the emerging Localism agenda, meant the time was right to pursue a Community Asset Transfer (CAT).

The Rural Projects Officer worked closely with Dalton Community Association and the County Council to progress the CAT. This included writing a feasibility study on the capacity and capability of the Community Association to take on the asset.

The CAT involved detailed work with Trustees of the Community Association, evaluating their capacity to take on the asset, making long term predictions of revenue generation for the Drill Hall, and consulting with user groups.

As this was a pilot process it took about a year to achieve the handover of the building.

What has been achieved

The Community Asset Transfer (CAT) will be successfully concluded by the end of August 2012. The process has had a number of consequences:

Dalton Police lease office space

Cumbria Police have a programme of divesting their property where appropriate.

The Community Association has developed a partnership with Dalton Police who plan to lease part of the building from September 2012 once refurbishment work has been completed.

This could not have happened without the transfer of the building to the community group and secures an income to cover running costs for a minimum five year lease period.

Strengthened governance

As a result of going through the CAT process, the trustees have worked on strengthening their own governance and structure.

Focus on sustainability

The prospect of taking over the asset has focused the trustees on ensuring that running costs are sustainable and this will help to secure the future of both the building and user groups.

Community Asset Transfer protocol

Cumbria County Council used the Drill Hall to pilot the process and has now developed a protocol for transferring properties and other assets to the community.



Dalton Drill Hall - Meeting Room

The Learning

The process of the CAT has taken about a year from planning to conclusion.

In order to evaluate the risks to each party a great deal of background work has been undertaken. It was helpful for the trustees to have the support of a community development officer who was independent of the community group but knowledgeable about their finances and governance.

The sense of achievement for the trustees in securing the future of their community building and all its varied user groups has been immense.

Contact Details

If you would like more information about Dalton Community Association and the Drill Hall please contact:

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