

October 2017

**Dalton Community Association (DCA) is a registered charity which maintains and runs The Dalton Community Centre, formally known as The Drill Hall. Dalton Community Centre is located in the centre of Dalton Town, north east of Barrow-in-Furness, with a resident population of around 8,000. The association aims to provide a great facility fit for purpose, for the benefit of the town.**

## Background

The Centre was built in the late 1920's as a Regular Army Drill Hall and Training Base. It was used as a Home Guard base during World War Two, and then a Territorial Army centre and Army Cadet base. The Centre was also used as a Junior School Hall and Gymnasium. Owners of the building, Cumbria County Council, leased it to Dalton Community Association for 25 years in the early 1990's.

The current Community Association became a registered charity in 1999 and went on to negotiate with Cumbria County Council to take on the Drill Hall as a Community Asset in 2012. The layout and use of the building has evolved over the years, from its military roots to a place with thousands of recreational and community users each month. The Community Association has managed much of this change and aims to have completed refurbishment by 2018.

## The Project

The Dalton Community Association began with an ambitious vision for the Centre as a community resource. They are still actively managing the reinvention of the building and it's uses. The group has taken a pragmatic, measured approach to making big changes to the building and the way its managed.

A refurbishment plan was drawn up following a comprehensive feasibility study in 2008. This detail helped to break the works into smaller projects which were manageable and affordable, making it possible to keep moving towards the bigger vision.



*Dalton Community Centre - Entrance*

Further steps the Community Association has taken to manage the changes include:

- Creating a stable governance base by appointing trustees who are committed to using their skills to develop the charity.
- Drawing up an effective business plan based on realistic charges for user groups, to secure a regular source of income to build future sustainability.

## What has been achieved?

The programme of refurbishment so far has included: new toilets; improvement to flat roof area; insulation to reduce heating costs; double glazing; zoned, remotely controlled heating system; improved security for the entrance and reception; new fire alarm system; new kitchens in the youth club and main hall area; improved storage; redecoration; and additional youth club facilities. The Centre has also been furnished with a new computer suite, and areas dedicated to specific users, including the Police, Library Service and Army Cadets.



*Dalton Community Centre - Before the renovation*

The refurbishment has allowed for expansion resulting in 4,500 visits per month with around 55 regular user groups. Every room is multi-purpose to enable it to be easily adapted for all current and future uses. Four different entrances, complete with toilet facilities, were created to meet the needs of specific users.

The heating is now able to be programmed into 4 zones so that separate parts of the building can be heated at different times as and when they are being used. A safety net has been installed which stops the system from freezing if the weather gets too cold.

All trustees are volunteers but the Community Association hire a part time cleaner and admin worker. Future plans include hiring a volunteer co-ordinator and possibly installing solar panels to help bring down the running costs.

## The Learning

- Have a **plan** if you need to raise substantial sums of money; the Centre has secured over £470k from dozens of contributors over several years.
- Have a clear and **shared vision** to adhere to, even if it seemed insurmountable at the time. Break it down into achievable projects.

## *ACT champions community and rural issues*

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*Dalton Community Centre - Computer facilities*

- **Diversity is key.** The age range of people using the Centre is 0 - 95, with opportunities to get involved with a huge range of interest groups.
- **Manage use of the facilities carefully.** The library at the Centre is located directly beneath the youth group area; this has led to a plan to install sound insulation to reduce noise interference. Have those different entrances so user groups aren't disturbing one another.
- **Be realistic** about costs and income. Look closely at how much you are charging and don't forget to take account of VAT payments.
- For large refurbishment projects **consider the potential for trustees personal liability.** Whilst nothing replaces good management practices, the Community Association also chose to become a Limited Company, to limit liability.
- All members of the governing body must be well informed and updated, and take **shared responsibility** for decisions.

## Contact Details

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