

In 2010 ACTion with Communities in Cumbria (ACT) secured funding for the Tebay and Orton Local Distinctiveness Development Project. The three year project was funded by the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), with support from the Churches Trust for Cumbria. The project was coordinated by a part time ACT Development Officer.

Project Origins

The Tebay and Orton Local Distinctiveness Project was designed to build on previous successful projects such as 'Hidden Britain' and 'Know your Place' (North Pennines), in which communities identify and celebrate what makes their area special. Whilst not possible to deliver a project of this kind across Cumbria, ACT chose to pilot the approach in an area which has a diverse population demographic and a variety of community structures.

Orton is a traditional settlement which has gradually grown over the centuries, with a picturesque village, market hall and parish church at its centre. It has a wider community of isolated farmsteads and rural hamlets in the surrounding area, one of which was Tebay. With the coming of the railways, Tebay station became a bustling junction.

The population of Tebay village boomed and the railway companies built 'The Terraces' to house the workers. This in turn resulted in the development of facilities such as post office, school and places of worship to cater for the needs of the new population of 'in-comers'. A corner of Orton parish was sectioned off and Tebay became an ecclesiastical parish in 1884 and gained status as a civil parish in 1897.

The distinct differences in the origins of Tebay and Orton villages has led to differences in the population demographic and focus for the heritage each community considers to be important.

This range of community structures in a relatively small area made Tebay and Orton parishes a prime candidate for a Distinctiveness project, which could then be used as an example to other communities.



'Ideas Tree' used during initial Community Consultation

Project Aims

The initial aims of the project were to:

- Work with the communities of Tebay and Orton Parishes
- Raise awareness of and pride in cultural heritage of the area
- Provide training, facilitate events and support local projects
- Strengthen the economic base through cultural tourism

Community Consultation

An organic approach was chosen to develop the project, in order to respond to the community's needs and interests. A series of open day drop-in events were organised to get the views of local people. Residents were asked for their project ideas by completing leaves for an 'ideas tree'.

This helped to give feedback on what people loved about the area, what they would like to change, and what they wanted to know more about.

Feedback from the Community

The information provided during these events was collated and several factors were identified that were important to the majority of people in the area.

- Tourism businesses across Tebay and Orton felt they were under represented and wanted more information to share with TIC staff and their visitors.
- St James Church in Tebay was in danger of closing and people felt that this would not be in the best interests of the community.
- Archaeology, landscape and heritage was seen to be extremely important to the area, but many expressed a need to learn more about it.
- Tebay residents wanted to explore the transport, landscape and farming heritage. Orton residents were very concerned with preserving the environmental heritage, flora, fauna and farming traditions.
- Some community members wanted to host a local May day music festival.
- Poor signage to Tebay on the M6 was also a concern.

Project Development

After consulting the Parish Council about the M6 signage it was clear the community had campaigned many times in the past without success. With limited time and resources it was decided to prioritise those areas we could influence more easily.

The idea of a music festival was also explored, but with several already running in the local area, this was also ruled out.

The project focussed on working with St James Church in Tebay, local tourism businesses, and to provide workshops to research local archaeology and heritage.

This in turn led to developing:

- The Friends of Tebay Church
- The Local Tourism Business Group
- The Lunesdale Archaeology Society

Project Outcomes

- Boost to local pride and knowledge
- Community members trained in a variety of transferable skills
- Local tourism businesses supported and strengthened through networking opportunities
- A new community facility in the vestry of St James Tebay.
- Education material provided for the local primary school
- Toolkits/case studies available for use by other communities undertaking similar projects

More Information

Video interviews with groups, Case studies and further guidance about this project can be found on the ACT website here:

www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/about/distinctiveness

For more information please contact us at ACTion with Communities in Cumbria on Tel: 01768 840827 or visit our website: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk

ACT champions community and rural issues

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