

HUBBERSTON AND HAKIN COMMUNITY CENTRE, PEMBROKESHIRE

SUMMARY

- Name of Organisation/ Parent Organisation: Hubberston and Hakin Community Centre
- Start Date: 1928. Ran by the community since August 2016
- Number of Employees: None
- Number of Trustees: 7
- Number of Volunteers: 3
- Structure: Charitable Incorporated Organisation

PRODUCT/SERVICE

Described by local volunteer trustees as the 'Hub of Hubberston', the community centre has become a focal point for the wellbeing of its local community, since it came under community ownership in July 2018. Welcoming over 300 adults and children each week, Hubberston Community Centre is one example of how a community has stepped in to save a local community amenity from closure.

Having been built in 1928 on gifted land, the hall was built as a memorial building for the men of the parish that had lost their lives in the First World War

Always the focal point of the community, generations of local people had grown up with the hall as a backdrop to their lives, and there was much public dismay when its closure was mooted as far back as 2015. At a public meeting at the hall, over 100 people came to voice their opposition to the closure, and the result was that the community stepped in to take on its management in 2016.

The community centre now works with around 20 local groups and hosts numerous activities across all ages and abilities including:

- * Pre-school playgroup, including Flying Start provision for 58 children.
- * Drama groups for children aged both under and over 8 years of age.
- * Youth club provision for 14 to 18-year olds.
- * Boot camp exercise classes run by personal trainer.
- * Women's football in association with local football club.

- * Adult learning classes in tai chi, art, and Welsh.
- * Wellbeing activities for adults with learning disabilities.
- * Exercise classes for those aged over 50 and those with long-term health conditions.
- * Table tennis, walking football and gardening club provision in partnership with U3A
- * Tuition by the local authority for local children.
- * Third sector support group for young carers.
- * Yoga classes for adults and children.
- * Supervised support for children's mental health services provided by the local health board.
- * Sequence and line dancing classes for adults of all ages and abilities.
- * Golden oldies sessions for those with memory and other associated health problems.
- * Luncheon club for older people and their carers.
- * Short mat bowls for all ages and abilities.
- * Coffee and cake sessions for local senior citizens hosted by local supermarket staff.
- * Collection point for local recycling charity.
- * Children's birthday and football parties.
- * Charity fundraising bingo run by the Ladies Glades.
- * Meeting venue for statutory, private and voluntary housing and care agencies.

HISTORY

The Memorial Hall was built in 1928 on land donated by John Thomas Llewellyn Davies, using money raised from the community to the memory of the men of the parish who lost their lives in the 1914-1918 war. In 1969, an extension was added using Education Committee funding. In 1989, the building passed into charitable status under the trusteeship of Dyfed County Council. Representative members of the committee were appointed from user groups (Mother and Toddler Group, Women's Institute, Milford Haven Town Band, WRVS, and Hubberston Pensioners Luncheon Club) as well as from Dyfed County Council's Youth and Adult Education Departments and Milford Town Council. A further five annually co-opted members were appointed from the local community. The trusteeship of Hubberston and Hakin Community Centre then passed to Pembrokeshire County Council.

It is five years since the council-owned centre was threatened with closure by the local authority. In the intervening years, the community worked hard to ensure the future of the centre by registering a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) with

the Charity Commission in 2016. The centre was then leased from Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) for a trial period and in July 2018 a community asset transfer from PCC to the CIO was agreed. Trustees say that the community takeover would not have been possible without funding and support from the Big Lottery Fund, administered by Invest Local. The long-term aim of the CIO is to be financially self-supporting by providing community activities in a suitably located, familiar and reasonably-priced venue, while fostering community cohesion and reducing social isolation in an area of deprivation.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The community takeover of the hall has given it a 'new lease of life', according to trustees, creating a strong social network and developing new community groups and friendships. People now check up on each other (for example, if someone doesn't attend a class or activity) and, along with the local church, the hall has become part of the backbone of the community.

The project has been a great focus for the centre's trustees who have been involved in its rejuvenation. The community feel that taking over the hall has been a positive thing - there was never any sense of resentment or feeling of burden. The experience has been rewarding, interesting and enjoyable with new friends and colleagues made through this process. Volunteer Peter Llewellyn, says that people have been happy to take on the responsibility of the hall and they get something back from it too, as their own lives are enriched.

A key achievement has been the extent to which the hall is now used by a vast range of local groups, resulting in it being used at full capacity throughout the week during term time. This has been largely down to the proactive work of trustees who have focused heavily on partnership working and linking in with other groups and networks in the area. To accommodate people of all ages and abilities the ramped access to the centre has been refurbished, funded from Invest Local monies.

The trustees come from varied professional backgrounds and this has given them an understanding of the importance of joint working and collaboration, which has been used to full effect in the development of the community centre. There are now 18-20 local organisations that feed into the hub, including a regular playgroup, Flying Start provision, youth club, lunch club, U3A group, bowls club and table tennis sessions three times a week.

A small room has been turned into a coffee bar, maximising the potential of the space, with a small kitchen, lounge area and pool table. This is now used by numerous agencies and has become an ideal space to hold one to one sessions with young people, creating a regular income stream from what had previously been considered a 'dead space'.

Future developments include a proposed 'community fridge' where people can pick up free food donations, building on the centre becoming a drop-off and

collection point for recycling for items not collected by the local authority. The community centre's toilets have also now become a public toilet facility during normal opening hours and feature on local tourism maps.

The facility has also provided a new focus for the social life of the area with activities scheduled to provide a natural flow of leisure time for local people. For instance, there is a popular walking football group that meets from 9.30-10.30 in the morning, which is followed by coffee and cake in the local church, so that people go from one session to another to provide mutual support to those who attend.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

Peter Llewellyn describes how working in partnership with others to achieve the community vision has really helped make the community centre what it is. That includes working with the county council, Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Action, and Building Communities Trust's Invest Local programme in what has been described by trustees as a real team effort.

The CIO is taking the approach of investing to save, using local grant schemes and opportunities to improve the building and its efficiency for long-term gain. The engagement of a local architect has seen plans drawn up for dedicated toilet and kitchen facilities for the pre-school playgroup, refurbishment of the existing toilets and extension of the Memorial Hall kitchen. Invest Local funding has been approved for this work to be carried on a phased basis over the next two years.

Other developments also include replacing the outdated gas boiler and incorporating solar panels to significantly reduce utility costs. Help has come in the form of free advice and support from Sustainable Communities Wales, which has helped to identify interventions that can make long-term energy savings. Tendering for both these projects are underway and once completed will form part of the centre's funding application for PCCs Enhancing Pembrokeshire grant due to be submitted in the near future.

Through these initiatives, the committee aim for the hall to become a low-cost sustainable model that can continue for generations. There is no immediate plan to employ anyone as the operation of the hall is manageable with the use of local trustees and volunteers and this will ensure there remains a sense of community responsibility and ownership.

The Walking Football Group



Volunteer Organisers of the Lunch Club

