

# A Heart for Duns

A Heart for Duns, run by people

with a heart for Duns.

The community hall in Duns was originally owned by the Lowland Reserve Forces & Cadets Association (LRFCA), a part of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) which was leased by Scottish Borders Council (SBC).

In 2010 the hall was losing money so it was proposed that it would close. However, the hall (the largest in Berwickshire) was considered such an important asset to the town that a concerned individual called a public meeting to which over 300 local residents attended.

After this meeting SBC abandoned their plans to close the hall, however this was just the beginning. Following this, in 2011, a small group got together to secure the hall's future. It started out as a Steering Group but became A Heart for Duns, run by people with a heart for Duns.

Initially an Options Appraisal was commissioned to look at the way forward – consulting the public, setting up a website, Facebook and other social/local media along with in-person public meetings to understand community views on such a proposal.

In 2012, the community explored other options including doing nothing, demolishing or building new. However, having consulted the community, the best option was to renovate and alter the existing premises.

Having received consent from the community to seek funding, the Committee completed funding application forms, ran community events and formed a number of sub-committees to focus on these tasks.

However, in April 2014, SBC gave up the lease on the hall and A Heart for Duns took up the lease and recruited volunteers. Subsequently, AHFD registered as a charity, recruited a Board of Trustees and set out a road map for the future.

AHFD expanded the number of events (including profits from the bar) and running the hall with strategic partners including the Operatic Society, Duns Players and Summer Festival. In 2015 – 17 however, the LRFCA offered to sell the building.



**The community took a big gulp!**

**Could they afford to run it? ? ?**



Over **300** local residents attended a public meeting



AHFD has secured around  
**£950,000** since 2017

The hall had always been a focal point even though it had been run by SBC but it was always the strength of the community that made it vibrant. In March 2018, AHFD successfully applied for a Scottish Land Fund grant which was enough to pay lawyer's fees, carry out building surveys, complete the purchase and even enough to finance a small celebration party!

AHFD also became a Development Trust, facilitated the set-up of a Men's Shed, set up and delivered a Coastal Geology project, supported Keeping Duns Blooming Marvellous, set up a community cinema and converted former flats to offices.

In 2019 – 2021 further improvements were made to the hall, including fitting an air-source heat pump, new lighting and a better ceiling and a feasibility study was commissioned to look at creating a bigger and better fit-for-purpose facility for the community.

A Community Fridge was also established which became the Community Larder in 2021. Among latest initiatives are also fruitful partnership projects, such as Duns Town Trail with Duns Rotary Club and Community Café and Pantry in partnership with Duns Food Bank.

Community ownership means AHFD is independent; can set local priorities for events and activities; can build local partnering and local collaborations; and can provide many services simply not available elsewhere. AHFD has opted to focus on key themes, amongst which are combating isolation, having a focus on culture, building local partnerships and developing projects and ideas within their community.

Using trading and investment from others AHFD has secured around £950,000 since 2017, and have plans to do so much more in terms of capital development and in providing community led services.

