

## Case study for Heritage Counts 2015

Theme demonstrated by case study:	Good example of how a small team took on a large project
Name of project/group:	Kirton in Lindsey Diamond Jubilee project
Location:	Yorkshire and Humber
Duration (if applicable):	

### Short description of project:

The Town Hall, a Grade II listed building within a conservation area, dominates the Market Place. It is a Palladian style building built in 1897 mainly from material originally from the Sessions Hall of the Kirton in Lindsey House of Correction. It opened in 1899 and had served its purpose well until falling into disrepair in the early 21st century.

Kirton in Lindsey is a growing rural community. The Town Hall was, however, becoming increasingly derelict and the closure of the main function room had left the community with nowhere in which to hold celebratory, community and educational events. People had to travel outside Kirton in Lindsey for all celebratory functions. Education and community use was also severely hampered and there was no land available in Kirton to build a new community centre.

The main aim of the project was to create a support centre for all the community, specifically: a community, heritage centre that was warm, comfortable and accessible by all; a large space for celebration, exhibitions, drama, concerts, meetings and sport - within the budget of all to hire; and a heritage and educational resource to be used by all residents. Another aim was to improve the skills of local craftsmen in the heritage field.

### What would have happened without this project/group?

Without this project, the building – which was in a dilapidated state – may have been sold to a private developer by the residents of Kirton Lindsey or even required demolition. A community heritage asset could then have been lost, severely affecting the quality of life and townscape of Kirton in Lindsey. The story of Kirton in Lindsey and the Town Hall would have had to have been interpreted elsewhere.

It is a strong and thriving representation of the heritage of Kirton and a manifestation of the community spirit that exists in this area. The residents have benefitted and support a truly committed group who have saved their building for generations to come.

How did the project achieve its objectives?

The roof was repaired and a total refurbishment undertaken. External and internal work to the roof, windows, doors and stonework was carried out, preserving the historic building for the future. An extension was built to provide access (lift), accessible toilets on floors, services, public conveniences (in exchange for the land) and to support economic sustainability.

A Heritage Project Officer was appointed and promoted and managed all heritage activities, including education packages for local school visits. This officer worked with different community groups including the Kirton Society, the Town's extremely active local history group who helped exhibit a large quantity of memorabilia, photographs and artefacts about the Town, which previously was not able to be shown to the public. They acted as curators, providing display cabinets with a rolling programme of exhibits for the interest and education of all residents and visitors.

The strong activity programme has helped the group achieve positive outcomes for people and communities. The project group has become more resilient and aware of the heritage and its value to the community has been immense.

What difference has it made? Main outcomes and outputs.

The building was brought into better condition, the heritage imbued in the building and its collections are better recorded and managed. People were able to volunteer time and develop heritage skills. A strong programme of activities increased opportunities for intellectual, sensory, social and organisational access and learning. The community has increasingly used the Town Hall as a hub for its tourism offer and the return of the venue to the heart of community life has increased the residents' quality of life and created a boost to the local economy.

The celebratory event 'Diamond Jubilee the Town Hall 10 years on' was a great success as an event to mark the restoration and successful operation of the facility.

What were the main lessons learnt or challenges? Would anything be done differently?

The project benefited from a Project Planning Grant in the early days and the group worked with an architect who was not conservation accredited. This caused some problems and the group then worked hard with the North Lincolnshire Council Conservation Officer to ensure they worked with heritage experts and pursued a sensitive restoration and adaptation for the building.

Now that the building has been fully restored, the focus is on the long term sustainability of the Town Hall as a heritage asset, together with improved promotion of the hall and its

heritage and community activities. The unrestricted income for the Town Hall in 2012/13 was £50,000+ whereas before restoration the average yearly income had been £3,000-4,000. This means that the Trustees find themselves in the position of managing a much larger organisation. This requires more professional systems and expertise to ensure the long term sustainability of the Town Hall and its activities. Along with volunteers and user groups, the Trustees have identified 5 strands of further development which are required to make the required step change. They include changes to governance and financial systems and training in marketing and publicity which all require input from external experts which comes at a cost. The group are now in receipt of an HLF Transition grant in order to help them sustain the thriving community facility they have restored.

The group notes that perseverance, patience and the ability to listen and take on advice are all key elements in order to achieve success.

What is the future for the case study?

The group have shared their story and lessons learnt widely with others wishing to pursue similar projects. HLF Transition funding awarded to the project will help the group plan new ways to deal with the success of the facility and help to maintain the current revenue.

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