



Cheviot Centre – Glendale Gateway Trust

 Wooler, Northumberland, England

Glendale Gateway Trust is a charity which established the Cheviot Centre, a community hub in Northumberland, which offers room hire and offices.

There are two community spaces available to rent in the centre, costing £8.50 per hour for local community groups of £14.50 per hour for private organisations. This includes guest Wi-Fi and full access to kitchen facilities. The office space is home to several local businesses, which benefit from competitive rates, 24-hour access, a communal kitchen and superfast broadband.



Interview Questions and Responses

How did you as a community agree the key objectives that you wanted your project to deliver? How did you decide upon a single project idea that could deliver against those objectives?

The local trustees of the Glendale Gateway Trust (GGT) understand Wooler and wider communities very well. Rural isolation was the key driver for the project and was voiced to the GGT. This was also accelerated by COVID-19 and Storm Arwen, which greatly impacted rural communities in Northumberland.

The Glendale Gateway Trust subsequently held a number of face to face community discussions and undertook a survey to gain views of the community in Wooler to gain their views on the potential services the Cheviot Centre could offer.

Describe the process by which you achieved consensus around objectives and projects. Has that consensus held or does it remain challenged by some in the community? If so, how are you dealing with that?

There was no challenge to the role and remit of the Cheviot Centre, becoming an emergency hub with backing from Northumberland County Council and the local parish council.

The community collectively realised how vital the Cheviot Centre was throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and to cope with the impact of Storm Arwen, supporting the local community throughout both.

However, the Gateway Glendale Trust has been challenged by some in the community regarding the purchase of older properties in Wooler to provide local affordable housing, providing an opportunity for families to live in the village. Consensus was achieved by sharing real life case studies to highlight positive impact.

How did you approach planning and project management around your selected idea?

Karen, operating as CEO of the GGT and three part-time members of staff manage all operations and manage projects at the Cheviot Centre,



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whilst the GGT trustees manage the governance of the trust and of the Cheviot Centre. This project management approach is supported by local volunteers who are involved delivering various community projects.

How has that stood the test of time through the project? Have you had to revise your plans. How have you managed that process?

The approach to planning and project management has worked effectively. The GGT are now aiming to decarbonise their operations at the Cheviot Centre and reduce costs by replacing an old boiler with solar PV, battery storage and other renewable energy technologies. This new change of direction was collectively decided by the trustees and the core GGT operational team, prompting a process of actively identifying grant funding.

How did you identify a funding need?

The GGT take a proactive and reactive approach to identifying funding needs for the Cheviot Centre. The operational team undertake in person community meetings and network with other community groups to understand local demand, which shapes the potential type of funding required. For example, establishing a food bank, a log bank to combat fuel poverty and a clothing bank.

However, operational costs are addressed to revenue gained from renting office space at the Cheviot Centre, annual grants from Northumberland County Council, rent from Newcastle Business Society based in the Cheviot Centre and from the GGT's affordable housing portfolio. The GGT then identify funding for additional projects at the Cheviot Centre.

How have you managed the process of bidding for funding?

There is a dedicated member of staff who is dedicated to writing bid applications. The operational team at the Cheviot Centre collectively identify projects which requires fund raising.

Funding typically comes from grants from charitable trusts and working in partnership with external organisations. For example, the Cheviot Trust organised a the 'Memory Lane Project' which provided music therapy for dementia patients, a service provided by a partnership of a local care home, a music therapist, the local parish council and grant funding from Bernicia Homes.

Did you have a need for specialist expertise for your project? If so how did you handle that and approach experts?

The Rural Design Centre, operating as a partnership of the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise, delivered a community survey to gain views on the scope and potential services of the Cheviot Centre without charging the Glendale Gateway Trust. This expertise was gained by Karen as CEO of the Glendale Gateway Trust building key networks with the Rural Design Centre and Newcastle University.

The Cheviot Centre is now working with CAN (Community Action Northumberland) regarding replacing its heating system, approaching them directly and will involve no extra cost.

What have been the hardest difficulties to overcome and how did you overcome them?

The Cheviot Centre has found it difficult to increase visitor numbers within the older demographic since the COVID-19 pandemic. To overcome this, the Cheviot Centre hosted as many community events as possible and ensured social distancing to build confidence among older members to attend the centre.

Appealing to young people and children has been another recent challenge. The Cheviot Centre therefore formed a new relationship with a local school through direct networking and undertook a survey to identify services and ideas.

Have you managed to stay true to the original project vision? If not, why not? If it has, how has this been achieved?

The GGT has remained true to its original project vision. This has been driven by the GGT directly and have actively reached out to the community in Wooler to understand services which are most important to them, adjusting the scope of the Cheviot Centre accordingly.

What have been the biggest learnings from the delivery of your project?

Local community groups or trusts have to be flexible, agile and engage with their community. Communities must try different methods of engagement including posters for events, magazine adverts for volunteers, letter writing to potential members, emailing community members and establishing a social media presence.

What decisions, or elements of organisation have been the most important in the delivery of your project?

The most important decision for establishing the Cheviot Centre was supporting other businesses and charities, making the centre feel like a community within a community and unlocking synergy between the organisations within the centre.

For example, the manager of Newcastle Business Society within the centre is the dementia champion for the community.

What were the most important sources of advice and guidance for your community as you moved through the different phases of the project?

The GGT actively works with other development trusts locally in Northumberland to obtain advice and guidance on areas of focus for the Cheviot Centre, generate project ideas and to identify funding opportunities.

The GGT works closely with Newcastle University and the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise which has enabled the GGT and the Cheviot Centre to obtain robust data and research findings to support funding bids as impartial evidence, whilst receiving valuable advice for developing all stages of community projects.

Key contact

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Links

Website: <https://www.glendalegatewaytrust.org/cheviot-centre.html>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/glendalegatewaytrust/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/glendalegatewaytrust/>

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