

## **South Lakes Development Trust** *Connecting Communities, Finding Solutions*



### **Key Facts:**

Incorporated as Private Limited Company July 2004  
Company no: 5177284  
Registered Charity 1108280

A not for profit 'social enterprise' with a board of 5 who give their time voluntarily.

The governance of the Trust is completely independent of the public sector.

Membership of the Trust available to individuals living within the parish boundaries of Windermere and Lakes.

Members legally obligated to a £1.00 liability.

Present staff compliment; three full time and one part time.

The company evolved following decision of the Lakes Market Towns Partnership (formed 2001) to establish an organisation capable of taking forward the onward delivery of community/economic development projects following termination of original funding available through the Market Towns Initiative.

SLDT were successful in bidding for approximately £1m MTI funding from the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) to carry out a specific range of projects identified during community consultation. The Trust was directly responsible for establishing and delivering the organisational structures required to meet the stringent demands of the NWDA during the key MTI funding period through to March 2008.

Other funds were also secured from public sector and charitable bodies to help secure the required match funding required to deliver the projects or aspects within them. Such funding was provided by Northern Rock Foundation, the Lankelly Trust and other public and private sector bodies. South Lakeland District Council agreed to act as accountable body to the Trust

During this period SLDT was responsible for taking forward/enabling/assisting in the delivery, amongst others, of the following key projects:

- Establishment and management of the Trust.
- Management and delivery of the Lakes MTI programme.
- Material enhancement to Market Cross and King Street Ambleside.
- Project to deliver a locally designed and manufactured vandal resistant replacement for the dilapidated Victorian bandstand on The Glebe, Bowness
- Upgrading of children's play area Queens Park, Windermere.
- Delivery of Towns Centre Management across the MTI area.
- Establishment of a Business Resource Centre and Support to provide critical administrative assistance to assist new business opportunities across early years of trading.
- Retail business development support and training.

- Provision of four incubator workspace units to house new business start up.
- Delivery of IT support programme assisting small local business with establishing internet presence and encouraging e-trading.
- Management and delivery of shop front enhancement scheme across MTI area.
- Management and delivery of a Community Chest Grant scheme to support community organisations.
- Funding feasibility studies and managing process into:
  - Refurbishment /rebuilding Troutbeck Swimming Pool.
  - Potential for electronics recycling centre in Ambleside meeting WEEE directives.
  - Masterplan for Ambleside.
    - Masterplan for Waterhead phase 1
  - Masterplan for Ellerthwaite Square and Library Gardens Windermere
  - Masterplan for Brockhole phase 1
  - Crescent road design scheme – contribution
  - Establishment of a Cultural Hub.
- Providing funding conduit to support delivery of Windermere Youth project.

Delivery of the projects, and funding to maintain support, effectively terminated in March 2008 with SLDT seeking ongoing route to maintain those projects seen as capable of delivering ongoing benefit into the community.

Additional funding towards core costs beyond March 2008 was successfully secured from:

- NWDA, South Lakeland District Council.
- Lakeland Limited, Booths.
- Windermere Town Council, Cumbria County Council, Lakes Parish Council.

Core funding has been reducing over the years since March 2008 with SLDT actively increasing its development of revenue from trading activities allied towards meeting its business objectives.

In November 2008 a major financial situation was identified regarding a £50k VAT liability that had developed in regards to funding received by the Trust that was classified as 'outside the scope of VAT'.

This figure related to VAT that had been paid out and then reclaimed by the Trust that is was then advised should not have been reclaimed. Subsequently NWDA made available some £32k towards meeting this liability ( the figure that had been directly related to that level of liability attributable to NWDA funding received) with SLDT agreeing to repay the balancing £18k, plus accrued interest, during the 12 months to March 2010. SLDT has not been able to recover the VAT from third parties and has therefore funded the repayment from its trading activities and thereby impacting on its ability to generate trading surplus for reinvestment locally.

The subsequent work required to secure a way forward following identification of the liability was a major distraction to the CEO of the Trust and held back further development of essential trading activities for many months, thereby directly impacting on revenue development for the years to March 2008 and March 2009.

Throughout the period however SLDT has maintained its support for those key projects that is wished to take forward beyond MTI. Where appropriate SLDT has developed the income streams available through such projects to reduce reliance on core funding and meet the VAT liability. These projects are:

1. Business Resource Centre.
2. Incubator workspace units.
3. Retail business development support and training.
4. Towns Centre Management.

Essentially projects 1-3 are capable of generating offsetting income whilst project 4 is a material cost against the Trust.

In the current financial year Bill Smith, CEO and retail specialist to the Trust has attracted in excess of £50k income through his specialised retail consultancy support across the northwest and into north and south Wales. This income has been critical in providing essential core funding support.

## **Towards 2103 – establishing a Community Anchor**

Looking forward SLDT now wishes to even more firmly establish its role as a **Community Anchor** and has recently launched its forward business plan to 2013: ***CommunityConnect***

The ***CommunityConnect*** business plan is available online via [www.sldt.co.uk](http://www.sldt.co.uk) (under about us) but, essentially, it identifies the desire of the Trust to provide the route to enable the retention and onward development of a number of key local services and facilities whilst maintaining the delivery of three of the four existing projects strands.

A proposed relocation to Windermere Library (to enable materially reduced premises costs) has been under negotiation with Cumbria County Council for almost two years. These extremely protracted negotiations through Capita, Library services and CCC property services are now almost completed and it is hoped that relocation by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 will be feasible.

Space at the library will not provide for incubator workspace and, as maintaining incubator occupancy has been a material challenge during the last 5 years, this is regarded as an acceptable revision to project delivery.

Hot desking provision will however be available assisting in the maintenance of resource centre income.

A fully equipped training room will also be established within the library by the transfer of existing furniture and equipment installed in existing SLDT offices. The negotiations will enable this space to be let as highly subsidised (or free) rates for local community groups.

It has also been agreed that initial rental paid by SLDT will be reinvested in improving various facilities within the library itself.

## **South Lakes Development Trust – towards 2013** **“CommunityConnect”**

### **Land:**

Extension of the existing objectives and remit of the Trust to provide a Community Land Trust for Windermere.

The Land Trust would provide the opportunity for the transfer of property assets from the public sector into the community to enable access to, or development of, such property, whether it be affordable housing, commercial property or land to be retained by the community for use by the community in perpetuity.

### **Central:**

The relocation of SLDT administrative activities to Windermere Library thereby enabling the ongoing cost effective provision of its existing core activities:

**Business Resource Centre**

**Retail Business Development Support:**

**Retail Revitalisation /Shop Doctor Support/ specialised retails training.**

**Towns Centre Management**

**Town Enhancement Consultancy/Walkability and pedestrian surveys**

**Community Consultation**

Whilst enabling the continuity of administration to deliver “**CommunityConnect**”

### **Convenience:**

Providing a social enterprise solution to the retention and refurbishment of Public Convenience facilities in the area which are otherwise likely to be closed by SLDC. Such closures would materially impact on community health and well being whilst delivering a very negative message within our tourist reliant economy.

In addition to identifying opportunities to generate income from the facilities it is seen as a route to provide vocational training opportunities in key building maintenance skills, ideally in conjunction with local Further Education colleges.

### **Information:**

Providing a social enterprise solution to the retention and regeneration of Tourist Information Services in the area, delivery of which is otherwise likely to be severely impacted by reduced financial support from SLDC. Reduction in service or closure of such facilities would create negative impact within our tourist reliant economy

In addition to identifying opportunities to generate substantially improved levels of income from improved commercial activity it is planned to develop the resource to deliver an improved community communication link between the public/private sector and the resident community.

### **Activity:**

Providing a social enterprise solution to the provision of new/enhanced or refurbished facilities to help develop community well being.

Such provision could include the desire expressed within the community to redevelop the old squash courts on Queens Park Windermere and the provision of allotments.