

Development support Report



Report is based on visit to UEDG 17th/ 18th January 2012 to meet Nick Jennings (main contact) and whole of Board of UEDG.

BL project:

To demolish and rebuild part of the existing Eskdalemuir community hub, preserving the existing footprint and creating an upper floor and car parking spaces in field opposite. Finished hub will provide: workspace, consulting room, room hire, retail area (possibly including PO service, kitchen / cafe).

Summary:

UEDG already has a very active programme of income generating events. Examples: 15 people are signed up for Spanish classes; 3 yoga classes a week; Tex Mex night; course on Permaculture. Forthcoming events: a Turkish night and participation in a major Dumfries and Galloway arts festival: Spring Fling. Until recently, the hub had one business tenant but they have moved out as part of the current building is deteriorating.

The group are investigating if some income generation can continue through the re-building because the main hall in the original stone school building has already been refurbished.

The capital build is already planned up to Stage 2 GCA checklist 3 although there may be some changes to the interior design following the planned community consultation.

UEDG have identified a challenging forward workload to make the Stage 2 bid as good as it can be. The Board and the employed Project Development Manager (Nick Jennings) are well able to take on this challenge although Nick Jennings's time could become a bottleneck. There are no particular development needs identified for the group itself at this stage. UEDG will continue to recruit new Board Members (they need a Treasurer) and are considering developing a second-tier management committee (non voting) of individuals that could work on special projects e.g., implementation of social care / support; development of chargeable learning

programme.

This project has the potential to be a flagship example for Big Lottery of community action in sparse rural areas that are experiencing deficits in local services and problems with access to services.

Area of benefit:

A population of about 450 are close enough to the Eskdalemuir hub to benefit, including residents living in or close to the north-south river valley of the White Esk. The area attracts visitors including some that have come from Glasgow and Blackburn recently to attend courses at the community hub.

The nearest services are approx 15 miles away by slow B roads into Lockerbie or Langholm. It is therefore a minimum one hour round trip by road for even the basics: cash point, PO, newspaper, milk, pub, school, and chemist. Currently there is a very limited bus service however it is believed that this could be cut. It can take up to 45 minutes to get emergency services to get here and up to a further 45 minutes to get to A&E. Bus services are limited and it cost an average of £6 in fuel for a return journey to the nearest shop etc

However there are some strong attractors leading to an influx of new people to the area and few houses are empty. There have been some new domestic properties built by a local building firm and more may be required including some family homes for people connected to Samye Ling (monastery and education centre). Upper Eskdale is a destination of choice for people moving in to the area (often from the North of England) to retire or for quality of life reasons. Others move to the area due to work or lifestyle connections with the world famous Buddhist monastery and education centre (Samye Ling) based just over a mile away from the Eskdalemuir community hub.

The area is very scenic with hill; river and forest settings open to visitors plus added attractions: wildlife, historical / archaeological interest. Eskdalemuir is one of the Lands End to John O'Groats routes increasing the numbers of visitors passing through (by car, bicycle and motorcycle).

Given all of the above, the area is unlikely to de-populate although the average age of the local population is rising and a significant number of them live alone (this may enable residents to develop further B&B activity). Over time, residents will need some degree of support to be able to remain independent as they get older. It is part of the mission of UEDG to enable this to be achieved. Generally people do not move away from the area once settled.

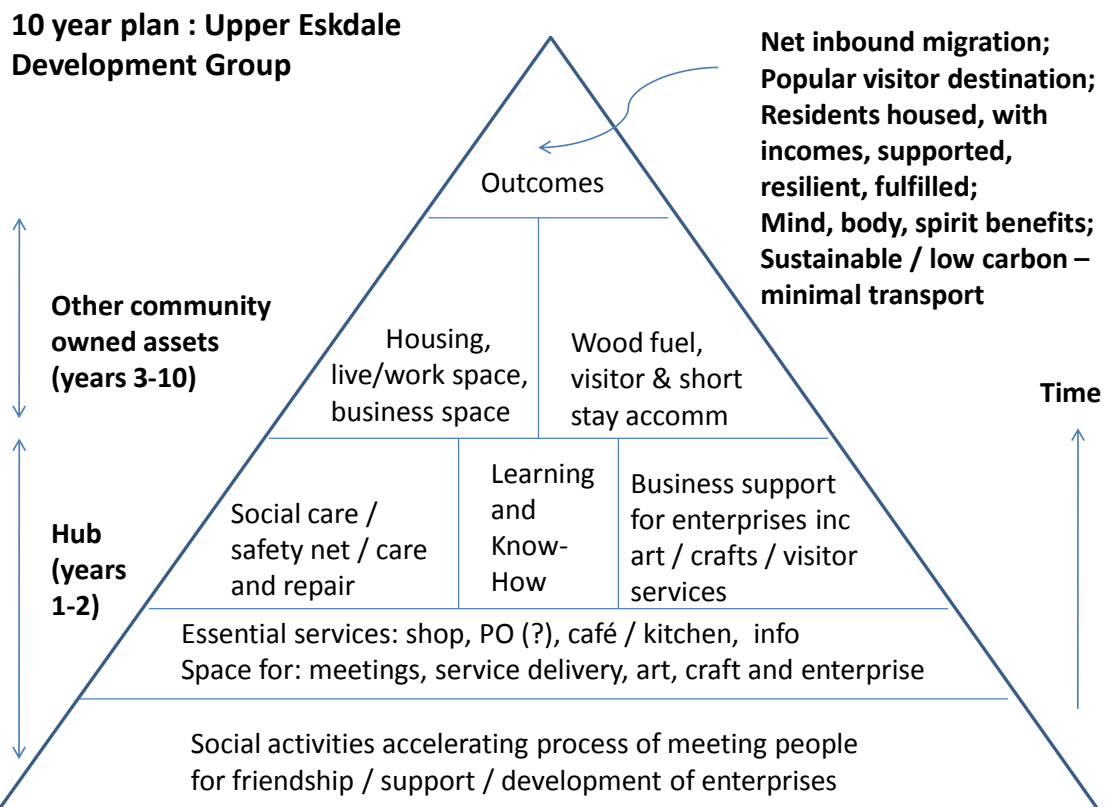
There are some constraints on businesses including slow broadband speeds and distance from bank / post office and markets. However there are a number of established art and craft businesses.

Upper Eskdale Development Group:

UEDG have one staff member, Nick Jennings, and a Board of 7. They are currently delivering development activity under Leader funding (until Feb 2013) as well as putting on regular social / learning events.

The UEDG have wider ambitions for the development of the area and the support of all residents and visitors as indicated in the diagram below. In due course, the Group seek to take on other assets (e.g., visitor / short stay accommodation, vehicles / wood fuel machinery) enabling income for UEDG and any residents employed / self-employed as a result. The group will also seek specialist grants to pump prime the set up of enterprises including care and support, wood fuel, and visitor facilities.

UEDG are NOT currently intending to develop community transport as they believe that the answer for Upper Eskdale is to establish services at the hub e.g., health / care consultations by visiting professionals and to provide some direct services such as a shop / cafe. The group sees the way forward as residents making less journeys to Lockerbie / Langholm than they currently do.



Notes to diagram: potential service detail (years 1-2)

	Social care / safety net / care and repair	Learning and Know How programme	Business support for enterprises inc arts / crafts and visitor support
Possible Initial development	Seek grant funding (non-BL) to develop and implement a basic service particularly for those with transport / mobility issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Handyperson - Shopping - Cleaning - Garden - Wood supplies - Errands. 	Build on current programme of chargeable regular and one off day courses for residents and visitors using both local skills / knowledge and bought-in tutors from further afield.	Venue for sale of products through hub. Seek grants for supporting arts / crafts enterprises. Seek grant funding for feasibility studies on visitor accommodation. Encourage / enable more B&B accommodation. Seek grants for development of guided walks, interpretation and other visitor facilities.
Second phase	Either an arm of UEDG or spin off social enterprise providing or organising more comprehensive services at various levels including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meals / sitting - Personal care - Live in support (accommodation share). 	Extended courses e.g., week-long and weekend learning programmes including accommodation packages with local B&B.	Stimulate / support a range of new enterprises. "Destination Upper Eskdale" website. Either an arm of UEDG or spin off social enterprise providing or organising a range of local accommodation inc B&B, bunk barns, glamping pods.

Introduction to Forward Work plan

The UEDG will be applying for BL development funding to fully prepare for the stage 2 bid. The broad areas to be developed using the grant (if successful) are set out below:

Work plan: final development of capital plan

The capital project is already at GCA checklist 3 stage and no more surveys / site investigations are required.

However UEDG will apply for development funding to cover professional fees to revisit the interior design (in response to the planned community consultation) and to do a check on opportunities for any cost savings on the build.

Work plan: residents survey

UEDG last did a full community survey in 2006 and three subsequent community consultation meetings and have a strong track-record of responding to the needs

identified through a range of activities / events. Some elements of the proposed re-built hub services are therefore tried and tested. Other elements have only been partially tested (cafe) and some elements are entirely new e.g., shop, social care / support.

There is a need to do a mail out to residents for a number of purposes, including the survey:

- Communicate / promote hub plans
- Assess demand for hub services (hence forecast income generation)
- Promote face to face consultation events particularly for residents seeking help / support to start / grow income earning hobbies / businesses
- Formal ballot of support
- Recruit additional members
- Carry out skills / interests audit (this will be used for a number of purposes including identifying people who 1) could train other residents and / or run events, similar to the forthcoming Turkish night, 2) who would like to develop any form of income generating hobby or business, 3) could carry out key tasks for the organisation such as bid writing.

Work plan: face to face community consultation

In addition to the survey, more in-depth consultation (focus groups) is required because:

- The world has moved on and residents may have new ideas about how UEDG / the hub should develop in the light of world events, withdrawals / reductions of public services and the effects of austerity measures on residents
- There is a need to accurately assess current demand for types of events / activities at the hub, as well as interest / need for business accommodation for enterprise activities (e.g., small businesses inc arts / crafts / food products)
- There is a need to ask residents to consider specific alternative models to fix on the best operating models for the shop, cafe and social care / support service.

Work plan: desk research

There is a need to do some further analysis on specific income generating opportunities for the hub including for weddings, business meetings / conferences and rental of hub space by businesses.

Work plan: partnership development

UEDG have an ongoing programme of partnership development. Some immediate priorities are:

- Discussions with Samye Ling about cooperative working to support all

residents and visitors (there are about 80 people permanently based at Samye Ling and it attracts visitor numbers of about 25,000 per annum). Samye Ling has a vegetarian cafe for day-time use e.g., lunch but is a complimentary venue to the Hub, rather than competing

- Discussions with the local church as to whether they would wish to use the hub for services (the congregation has fallen to low levels and may not be able to sustain the church building)
- Eskdalemuir Hall (ESMP): this hall (ownership unclear) is a complimentary space to the hub and can cater for activities unsuitable for the hub including indoor sport e.g., badminton and certain types of larger events such as discos (however it is simply a basic hall without meeting rooms, cafe, kitchen, disabled facilities etc etc).

UEDG will continue to work with:

- Forestry companies: Eskdalemuir is surrounded by extensive forestry operations on a large scale. The relationship with residents needs actively managing due to traffic (heavy lorry) issues and other considerations
- Local business people / philanthropists
- Groups in Langholm and Lockerbie (including those wishing to visit Upper Eskdale for leisure / recreation or learning reasons)
- Wider arts / tourism structures to promote Upper Eskdale as a destination.

Work plan: engage with specialist advice

UEDG need to hire some specialist advice on:

- Complete the application for charitable status
- VAT for trading including advice on when / whether to register and leading to finalisation of the cash flow projections
- Advice on licensing including any forthcoming changes
- Micro-breweries (there is the possibility of running one from the hub)
- Shop prospects: identify a suitable range of goods (for residents and visitors) and plan the opening hours for the shop
- Cafe prospects: identify a suitable format / offer, opening hours. For example, a practical approach might be an all-year round cafe on one day per week for residents supplemented by cafe opening to coincide with known peaks in visitor numbers
- Final check on deeds to land and property to ensure that there are no restrictive covenants or similar.

Work plan: visits to other projects

Visit other rural projects in sparsely populated areas particularly where they have implemented some of the elements intended for the Eskdalemuir hub e.g., social care / support, wood-fuel, visitor facilities and enterprise support.

Work plan: grant funding

Revamp pipeline of grants prospects and put in applications (non-BL) for:

- Capital inc specialist capital e.g., possible a fully accessible shower
- Revenue costs (pre and post re-build)
- Pump-priming enterprise areas e.g., social care, visitor accommodation.

Work plan: cash flow and budget preparation

Revisit original financial projections and review revenues and costs in the light of latest information and consultation and deskwork results.

The current business plan shows that in the first three years of post rebuild trading; an additional total of 165k revenue would be needed to support staff and running costs. UEDG will need to “close the gap” through:

- Additional grant applications
- Additional trading activity (including, for example, an enlarged programme of chargeable learning activities)
- Make savings on projected running costs
- Do more through volunteers
- Explore possibility of revenue grant from BL.

There needs to be a budget for the pre-rebuild trading period as well as a three-year cash flow projection from the date of completion of the rebuild.

Indicative timetable (critical tasks) with earliest possible completion dates

Task	Approx timetable (all dates 2012)
Draft development funding bid for BL	By 15 Feb '12
Identify possible suppliers of development support	Mid February
Draft briefs for development support consultants	Mid February
Appoint consultants	Mid March
Mail ballot / survey to residents	End March
Face to face consultation	Mid – end April
Desk research	Mid April
Pursue non-BL grant funding	Ongoing
Draft S2 bid	April
Budget / cash flow revision	April / May
Conclude any capital revisions	Early May
Submit draft bid to Jacqueline (BL) and to Annie (SIB) for comments	End of May
Final checks and submit S2 bid	Mid-June

Checklist of deliverables for S2 bid

- All items in GCA guidance including checklist 3
- Stage 2 bid
- Cash flow (up to end of re-build)
- Cash flow projection plus notes on assumptions (especially income) for 1st three years of post re-build trading
- Business plan (already available – no need to update)
- Summary of findings / learning from consultation, surveys, desk research summarising implications for income generation.

Other miscellaneous points:

Young people:

There are few young people in the Upper Eskdale area. The nearest schools are 15 miles away. The Dumfries and Galloway region has the second highest average age in Scotland and although young families continue to live and move into Eskdalemuir becoming a 50+ / retirement destination. The numbers of young people are currently too low for UEDG to be able to offer dedicated young people's services to young residents. However UEDG will continue to ensure that their main programmes of events are suitable for whole families.

Inclusion:

The area attracts visitors and some settlers from abroad (particularly connected to Samye Ling) and UEDG are keen to ensure that everyone is made to feel welcome.

Broad band:

UEDG are making enquiries as to any plans within the near future for broadband services in the area to be upgraded. Unless something is done, the broadband speed and loss of connections is thought likely to prevent the establishment of some businesses that operate in the hi-tec, software / computer games, and media sectors.

Part three – Agreed action plan

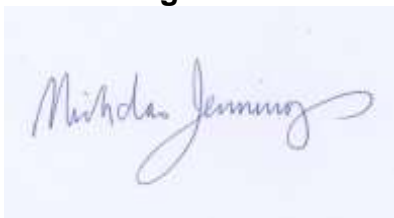
NJ – Nick Jennings – UEDG

AT (SIB) – Annie Tunnicliffe – The Social Investment Business

No	Action	Description	Person Responsible	Timescale/ Date (all 2012)
1	Development funding application to BL	UEDG to finalise	NJ with comment from AT (SIB) if needed	15 Feb '12
2	Consultancy briefs	Draft in readiness for development funding being approved	NJ with support from AT (SIB) if needed	15 Feb
3	Consultant selection	UEDG to appoint consultants to deliver against development funding	NJ with support from AT (SIB) if needed	Mid Mar
4	Non-BL grants	Apply for non-BL revenue / capital grants	NJ with support from AT (SIB) for read-throughs if needed	Ongoing until June
5	Pre-rebuild cash flow	For period from now until hand-over of rebuilt building	NJ with support from AT (SIB) to review	May

No	Action ... continued	Description	Person responsible	Timescale/ Date (all 2012)
6	Cash flow projection	Revise assumptions of income, costs for post rebuild trading	NJ with support from AT (SIB) to review	May
7	Stage 2 bid	Draft main bid	NJ with support from AT (SIB) if needed to identify arguments to make and to review when drafted	May
8				
9				
10				

Applicant / grant holder
Name: Nicholas Jennings



Signature:

Service provider
Name: Anne Tunnicliffe 07890 825978
Signature: