



**Greater Morpeth
Development Trust**
Regeneration of town & countryside
www.gmdt.net

Ten years of working for Morpeth



It is 10 years since Greater Morpeth Development Trust (GMDT) was established as a community-led organisation working on behalf of the people of Morpeth to improve the town and surrounding countryside for their benefit through the implementation and delivery of quality projects enhancing the environment, safeguarding the town's heritage, and promoting the economic and social well-being of all those living and working in the area. Inside Morpeth Editor Ian Leech looks back at what the Trust has achieved and delivered in that time.



More than £7 million worth of projects endorsed by the community and supported by a host of key partners, funders and volunteers covering a wide spectrum of life in and around Morpeth that might very well never have been devised and delivered if the Trust had not existed, would be the simplistic headline answer to that question. A quick and easy response but one that by no means tells the whole story of the contribution GMDT has made – and continues to make – to life in the town.

Over the past decade there have been some spectacular Trust contributions the most notable of which would be the design and delivery of the Morpeth Town Hall project in 2009 that not only repaired, refreshed and refurbished the iconic 300 year old building but gave it a new lease of life as a 'fit for purpose' 21st Century focal point of life in the town.

There have been other high profile projects including improving and opening access to riverside and woodland walks into and around the town from Mitford, through to the picturesque village of Bothal from the Whorral Bank and the ancient Bluebell Woods which won a Northumbria in Bloom Gold conservation project award for the way the work was carried out. Coupled with these physical works improving paths and fencing and installing seating, GMDT has been responsible for designing and placing informative and environmentally sympathetic signage in key locations so that local residents, visitors to the town and walkers could be more knowledgeable and better informed about what to look for on their way. More than 100 signs have been erected over the past decade.

Then GMDT played a leading part in Morpeth's Emily Inspires! campaign to honour and mark the part local suffragette Emily Wilding Davison played in changing

Edwardian attitudes to women being given the right to vote. As part of the campaign that began with the fitting restoration of Emily's grave in St Mary's Churchyard, a year long programme of events culminated in a day of activities that attracted widespread national and even international media attention and coverage to mark the 100th anniversary of the return of her body to Morpeth after she was fatally injured when she was struck by King George V's horse Anmer during the running of the 1913 Epsom Derby.

Over the past 10 years there have been many other perhaps more modest GMDT - but just as impacting - projects that have made a real difference to the lives of local people. Each year the Trust supports the Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering featuring the area's rich cultural traditions as well as organising the town's contribution to the nationwide Heritage Open Days' celebration of all that's best about Britain's great architectural history

The Trust has encouraged local people to go out walking to improve their health and fitness; taken part in environmental clean-ups; staged the family fun 'Picnic in the Park' afternoons at the very start of the school summer holidays; supported local authors such as Bridget Gubbins by publishing her fascinating series of books delving into so many aspects of Morpeth's history; brought professional theatre to the town through regular visits by Northumberland Theatre Company; co-ordinated an annual World Book Night to celebrate the enjoyment of reading; and re-introduced the movies back to the town through the monthly cinema nights it organises in the Town Hall.

Even here at Inside Morpeth we are indebted to Greater Morpeth Development Trust for its initial and on-going encouragement and support to launch our magazine nearly seven years ago.

