

The Trust works through a series of 'Interest Groups' each headed by a Board Director covering the arts and culture, heritage, the environment and the community. With a small professional staff of just three, it relies heavily on the support of volunteers from board level down to bodies on the ground to run many of the events and activities listed above.

So partnerships beginning at that level right up to working with major national and regional funders and supporters prepared to back the Trust's work with grants and funding, remain fundamental to its success and on-going ability to bring forward new and exciting projects such as the re-modelling of Morpeth's railway station to modernise its facilities and give it an imaginative and sustainable future as both a place of work and a major gateway into the town.

(You can read about the GMDT's latest railway station news elsewhere on page 7 of Inside Morpeth.)

The Trust has also facilitated a study into an ambitious HeArt plan to give Morpeth its own arts and cultural centre which many feel is notably missing from the town's facilities – a good example of GMDT raising the possibility of what can be achieved and bringing partners together to try and realise that ambition.

GMDT's Chief Executive David Lodge came from a commercial background before

becoming involved in economic and community development and is passionate about seeing Morpeth's economy thrive. He has, therefore, pro-actively chaired the Town Team set up as a partnership between the Trust, Morpeth Town Council, Morpeth & District Chamber of Trade, Sanderson Arcade and Inside Morpeth since it was established in the wake of the Government's Portas Initiative to improve the trading lot of the country's high streets.

Together the partners work to raise the profile of Morpeth and make a positive impact on the local economy which corresponds with one of the Trust's key objectives.

David also chaired the Economy Group for the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan along with a number of Board Directors and volunteers who contributed to the vision for the town and is now keen to see that vision realised through the development of a resourced action plan.

"The past 10 years have been full of challenges alongside the exciting delivery of so many projects that we believe have made Morpeth a better place to live, work and visit," said Doug Phillips who has chaired the Trust Board for most of that time. "We are proud of the fact that the Trust has made a real difference to the lives of very many local people through our work.

"But there is no disguising the fact that it has been difficult at times because for a non-

statutory organisation such as ours funding is always an issue. We rely on the support of partners and funders and we have been fortunate that we have built up solid working relationships with people who have bought into the vision of a Morpeth of the future that we share with many in the community

"We need that backing to continue going forward as an organisation just as we need the support of the wonderful volunteers without whom we could not do what we do. The strength of GMDT as an organisation lies in the cohesiveness that exists between our staff and volunteers both at Board level and in our interest groups where there are shared ambitions to deliver quality outcomes for the people of Morpeth across a whole range of activities.

"This approach has built strong working partnerships with local authorities, the private sector, the third sector and community organisations and we want to extend these links going forward. Over the past decade we have been proud to have been involved in making Morpeth a better place to live, work and visit."

I started this 10 year review of Greater Morpeth Development Trust's impact on the town by saying it had delivered investment totalling some £7m that might otherwise never have happened. By the end of 2017 that figure could rise to close to £9m if the Trust's ambitions for Morpeth Railway Station are fulfilled.

