



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

Karen Froggatt, Cheviot Centre
ceo@wooler.org.uk

Links

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

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

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

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CheviotCentre>



Portlaoise Enterprise Centre

 Portlaoise, County Laois

Portlaoise Enterprise Centre (PEC) is a not-for-profit company in the community sector which offers a range of facilities to encourage businesses to develop, including:

- Hot desks (low-cost with no long-term lease agreement)
- Co-working
- Small office space
- Industrial units (ground floor with roller shutter door access, located in Portlaoise)
- Training facilities
- A range of amenities such as conference rooms and canteen areas.

The PEC obtained funding from the LEADER programme to expand the building, opening 6 new office spaces and upgrading meeting rooms, enabling new businesses to be based at the centre.



Interview Questions and Responses

How did you as a community agree the key objectives that you wanted your project to deliver?

The Portlaoise Enterprise Centre is designed to support start-ups and growing businesses as its main ethos. Since opening in 2006, it has provided a low-cost space for business and creating long-term partners.

Therefore, internal projects are designed to retain businesses and support them to develop, as a not-for-profit organisation. The main income for the PEC is rental income and the renovation projects at the PEC have been designed to achieve this.

How did you decide upon a single project idea that could deliver against those objectives?

It is critical to have safe and financially established businesses in the PEC to support financial stability. Therefore, financial opportunities drive project ideas, and this is the only way to develop projects as a PEC.

The opportunity under the LEADER programme appeared and enabled PEC to add six new small office spaces and upgrade the training and meeting rooms. This allowed the PEC to increase the number of businesses at the PEC.

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?

The PEC Board is key for gaining consensus around projects and internal objectives. There was no challenge from the community for expanding the PEC.

However, the board are key for approving which businesses are based within the PEC, following a formal application process. Patricia as Centre Manager has direct contact with prospective businesses to ensure the PEC is suitable and to understand their needs.



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

Planning and project managing the expansion project was the responsibility of Patricia, with support from the PEC Board. Although Patricia works part time, the PEC is well established and in operation since 2006 requiring a relatively low amount of resource to manage operations, therefore there is necessary capacity to manage expansion projects.

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

The project management approach was strong for further developing the PEC and the PEC secured additional clients following expansion and upgrades.

There is no further scope to extent and the PEC is focusing upon filling the existing space.

How did you identify a funding need?

The expansion of the PEC required funding from the LEADER programme, including the addition of dividing walls and upgrading internal infrastructure. This funding was identified by continually researching funding opportunities and working with organisations such as Laois County Council.

The PEC also secured further funding via Connected Hubs for energy upgrades including new UPVC windows, EV car charging infrastructure and LED lighting, improving the infrastructure further.

The PEC secured funding via Enterprise Ireland Powering the Regions Enterprise Centre Scheme which provided salary support for securing support for managing the centre and for marketing the PEC.

How have you managed the process of bidding for funding?

Patricia, in partnership with the PEC Board wrote the applications to secure the funding, ensuring the story was told well and financial information was accurate.

To support the grant funding via LEADER, the PEC accessed bridging finance from Clann Credo¹ ensure the upgrading of the PEC was completed. However, funding from Enterprise Ireland and Connected Hubs was provided in advance of works.

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

Procuring contractors was managed internally, requiring three quotes for the renovations, whilst asking local businesses and tradespeople to provide quotes.

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

The completion of the three funding applications for the expansion and final reports was challenging in terms of time and associated paperwork. This required using the expertise of the PEC Board and simply providing dedicated resources through Patricia as Centre Manager.

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

The PEC is remaining true to its original vision through the expansion. The PEC is providing initial business support to start-ups and providing the appropriate facilities. If the PEC cannot help, businesses will be signposted to other enterprise centres or the County Laois Local Enterprise Office (LEO).

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

The remote working opportunity is not having a big impact in comparison to how the PEC originally envisaged. Therefore carefully considering the purpose of enterprise centres for the long-term is key.

Sufficient capital investment is required before launching an initial building or expansion project, especially if communities are running a not-for-profit centre and to keeping the prices low.

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

The Board has been critical in the decision making process which has a diverse mix. This includes Laois County Council and business owners who know the challenges and requirements for start-ups and businesses.

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

The Connected Hubs platform offers regular online meetings, networking events and opportunities for building connections. The platform have been key for helping the PEC build a sustainable model and build its client base.

Key contact

Patricia Frayne, Portlaoise Enterprise Centre
patriciafrayne@enterprisecentre.ie

Links

Website: <https://enterprisecentre.ie/>

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

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/portlaoiseenter>

LinkedIn: <https://ie.linkedin.com/company/portlaoise-enterprise-centre>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1qImQkYtIgpUh4EK9Y3Wcw>

¹ <https://www.clanncredo.ie/mi-loans-leader-loan-fund#bottom>



Pulse Hub / Ballinasloe Enterprise Hub

 Ballinasloe, County Galway

The aim of the project is to support enterprise, innovation and start-ups to grow the economy of Ballinasloe and increase footfall. The new remote working and co-working hub will involve the refurbishment of the 6,000 sq.ft. Bank Chambers Building, to work in collaboration with the existing Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre and the Galway County Council Enterprise Space.

The project aims to attract over 40 people to work remotely by 2023. Residents will be able to access new job opportunities, allowing the population to retain and adapt to new types of work.

The project received a €490,748 grant from the Just Transition Fund, a €320,000 loan from Ballinasloe Credit Union and a €250,000 grant from the Town and Village Renewal Scheme in 2021.



Interview Questions and Responses

How did you as a community agree the key objectives that you wanted your project to deliver?

Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd (BACD), a not-for-profit organisation with charitable status, has a board with membership from the local community, businesses and Galway County Council. The BACD was formed in 1999 to attract investment and jobs into Ballinasloe, initially funded by Ballinasloe Chamber of Commerce, Ballinasloe Credit Union, Ballinasloe Town Council, Creagh Community Development and members of the public.

A board manages the BACD and was a key mechanism for agreeing the objectives of the Pulse Hub project.

How did you decide upon a single project idea that could deliver against those objectives?

The objectives of the Pulse Hub align directly with BACD and the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre which it operates, aiming to drive footfall in Ballinasloe town centre, drive investment and create and support jobs. Furthermore, a remote working hub for businesses aligned directly to the requirements of the Just Transition Fund.

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?

The Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre is fully occupied and BACD decided that expansion was key to provide a remote working hub and more office space for businesses, which will provide increased revenue through rents.

In 2019, the Pulse Club was formed, a networking group for businesses with training and events provided. The Pulse Club also needed a place to meet. In addition, Galway County Council also had enterprise space which the BACD were using, but was no longer in use. Therefore, the BACD bought the building for the Pulse Hub to provide extra physical space, fully supported by neighbours of the building and the local business community.



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

Lyn Donnelly, Manager of the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre, is a full-time employee with project management experience. The project is directly managed by Lyn and by volunteer sub groups of the board. Lyn's wages are funded by the BEC, generated by revenue from businesses occupying the centre, established over the last 25 years.

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

The plans for the Pulse Hub / Ballinasloe Enterprise Hub have changed over time. Originally the BACD considered renting a building. However, the agreed approach was buying the premises using the Just Transition Fund, although the concept for establishing a remote working hub has remained the same.

The project management was undertaken by Lyn, internally. Costs were uncertain and putting enough against it was a priority. As costs have changed since the original application, growing from a 2,000 sq ft to a 6,000 sq ft building, the process had to be managed closely by the Board due to a financial shortfall.

How did you identify a funding need?

BACD identified a funding need by continuously horizon scanning for grant funding opportunities, a role undertaken by Lyn as the single paid member of staff. There was a clear funding need to finance the purchase of a building to establish a physical hub in Ballinasloe town centre.

The shortfall has been covered by securing funding from the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, and a loan from the Ballinasloe Credit Union. In addition, because of extensive business relationships established since 1999, the BACD were able to approach local businesses for unsecured loans. As the BACD is long established, it is able to leverage funds.

How have you managed the process of bidding for funding?

The BACD has established strong connections with existing funders and the local senator raised awareness of the Just Transition Fund with the BACD, who helped Lyn and the BACD with applications, in tandem with support from the board. The expertise of the board was critical in this process.

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

The BACD tendered for a consultancy to support with writing the documentation to do the public procurement for the design team for the new Hub. This was a really useful process for BACD and was procured directly through existing business connections. Existing grant money from a different funding pot in the Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre was used.

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

The main challenge is securing match funding. Initially costs were uncertain, although the BCD obtained cost estimates.

The BCD has also obtained challenge from the local community over the renovation of the building is not through a local contractor, as the BCD has to open the tender to Europe wide contractors. The BCD managed this challenge through communicating channels with the local community, including the Ballinasloe Life Magazine, strong social media presence and directly responding to emails.

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

Although around 11 months from opening the new Hub, the BCD have been approached by local community groups regarding occupying the Hub. However, the main focus is business supporting businesses and there is currently a waiting list for occupying the Hub.

This vision was underpinned by initial market research via a survey through the Pulse Club network, the Ballinasloe Life Magazine, social media and business emails. Out of approximately 95 respondents, around 83 were interested in obtaining individual office space and were overwhelmingly keen on the remote working hub concept.

The project and wider board has stayed true to the project vision, alongside the need for the Hub to generate income and to become a sustainable remote working hub.

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

Establishing a strong board who can support staff in making critical decisions is a key learning for any community aiming to establish a Hub or begin to bid for large-scale funding.

The first application to the Just Transition Fund directly and independently was challenging, as previously the BCD have applied as partners with the County Council to largescale funding pots. Following the successful application, the BCD are now independently managing the project and can make decisions more swiftly.

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

The key decision was to still pursue establishing the Hub despite the financial shortfall in funding due to larger premises than originally planned. The board were critical in taking a well informed and evidenced risk and pushing forward with the project. This has been critical as the project has now been secured by a loan from the Ballinasloe Credit Union, if other grant funding is not secured in the meantime.

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

Expertise on the BCD Board was critical from initial project design, to applying for funding and moving forward into construction phase. For example, the Chair of the Board, Seamus Duffy, was a former AIB Bank in a high-profile management role, with a range of financial expertise. The BCD Board was originally established in 1999 with representation from businesses, the County Council and local community, with membership co-opted annually. Furthermore, a sub-committee has been heavily involved in shaping and delivering the project, meeting in between board meetings with Lyn as project manager.

Key contact

Lyn Donnelly, Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd
Lyn@bacd.ie

Links


YouTube video introducing the project: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8Bra4KBeko>

Ballinasloe Life Magazine (page 7): <http://www.ballinasloeenterprisecentre.ie/magazine/issue72/Ballinasloe-Life-Magazine-Issue-72.pdf>

Ballinasloe Area Community Development Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/BallinasloeEnterpriseCentre/>



Saint Joseph's Community Centre: New Remote Working Hub and Cycle Tourism Centre

 Kilcormac, County Offaly

This project is designed to reinvigorate the local economy and realise the potential of Kilcormac as a gateway to Boora. The project is aiming increase footfall and dwell time of visitors, supporting existing businesses and creating demand for new enterprises and activities related to the tourism industry.

The Tourist Recreation Hub will include facilities for bicycle hire, a coffee shop, commercial space, train ticket purchase and a tourist office. Within the Community Centre, there will also be a Remote Working Hub which offers co-working facilities for commuters and businesses. The Remote Working Hub will offer double and single office hubs, alongside meeting rooms, conference space and upgraded facilities. The space will offer lower rates to new enterprises and an alternative working option for commuters within the community.



This project received grant funding from the Just Transition Fund for €435,796.



Interview Questions and Responses

How did you as a community agree the key objectives that you wanted your project to deliver?

The Kilcormac Development Association was set up to stay ahead of the needs of the local community and established a strategic plan for Kilcormac to 2032. The plan identified how to create sustainable employment, enable increased dwell time and rebrand as the gateway to Lough Boora.

A feasibility study was undertaken to better understand how to leverage sustainable employment in Kilcormac which identified the potential development of a remote working hub and cycle tourism centre.

How did you decide upon a single project idea that could deliver against those objectives?

The project is harnessing the existing community centre to be developed to attract tourists, become an enhanced enterprise hub and community working hub.

The project idea was identified through the Board of the Kilcormac Development Association, using evidence from the existing feasibility study and based upon the internal strategic plan.

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?

The objective of the project has not been challenged, and consensus has remained strong.

This has been supported by the strategic plan, underpinned by a survey to all households which obtained a 35% response rate, several public consultations and engaging with other community groups such as the GAA, Tidy Towns and Green Offaly.



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

Linda Kelly acted as project manager for the project. As a result, she sits on the executive management team and the Board of the Kilcormac Development Association has played a key role in making decisions.

Linda organised a separate project planning group, named the Executive Management Team with two key members of the Board attending regular weekly or bi-weekly meetings. Hosting regular meetings has been key for managing the project, especially when designing tenders for procuring external support.

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

The approach of project management through the Executive Management Team has been critical in approaching challenges and revising plans. The Executive Management Team presents the problems and options for solutions, allowing the board to make a clean decision.

For example, due to the cost of materials and construction increasing by 30–50%, certain elements of the project had to be removed. This involved the board playing a key project management role.

How did you identify a funding need?

The opportunity from the Just Transition Fund came in parallel when the KDA were seeking funding for a larger scale centre and to drive long-term employment for Kilcormac and added economic impact in the community and benefiting local retailers.

How have you managed the process of bidding for funding?

Linda managed the bidding process directly, with support from the Executive Management Team and the KDA Board. Linda is an employee funded by the KDA using revenues generated primarily from existing tenants.

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

At the very start of the application process for the Just Transition Fund, the KDA directly approached existing consultant contact to support with the application process in initial stages.

Following this, the KDA procured an architect through an open tender process, who subsequently appointed a civil engineer.

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

The main difficulties have been delays to the project relating to the funding application process and securing planning permission. These difficulties have been overcome by working closely with the Just Transition Fund team and Offaly County Council. The expertise of members of the board has been critical in overseeing these difficulties.

Due to high construction costs, the KDA are currently deciding different options for the project and will seek additional funding if required or seek a new arrangement with the Just Transition Fund regarding the usage of the grant funding.

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

The KDA and community have remained true to the original project vision of generating increased local employment and footfall in Kilcormac.

Although different elements of the project may have to change, it will not have an impact upon the overall project and vision.

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

Communities require a clear plan as an initial step, identifying what you want to achieve and where you want to see the plan or village in 10 years' time.

This creates a foundation before applying for funding and identifying what the community is trying to achieve and how you are going to achieve it.

Undertaking feasibility studies can support this process, providing evidence for funding applications.

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

The key initial decision was aligning the project with the existing strategic plan and feasibility study, which was undertaken to identify ways to improve tourism in Kilcormac.

These two documents were merged to identify what the KDA wanted to achieve and the outcomes of the project, centred upon generating employment opportunities, having a direct economic impact and generating revenue for the community centre.

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

The KDA worked closely with Offaly Local Development Company which opened professional networks to develop the project, whilst advising upon governance, funding opportunities and accounting.

However, the KDA Board and Executive Management Team had a strong membership of experienced professionals to design and develop the project and access professional networks to support procurement.

Key contact

Linda Kelly, Kilcormac Development Association (KDA)
kdamanageroffice@gmail.com

Links

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

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18TGaEc8kDw>