

CASE STUDY

OLD PINWHERRY SCHOOL COSY SPACE

Funding Amount: £6,710.56

Community Led local Development -
Ayrshire Rural and Islands Ambition (ARIA) –
Small Capital Fund (2022/23)

BACKGROUND

Pinwherry and Pinmore Community Development Trust (PPCDT) was formed in 2017 with the aim of improving the quality of life for residents of both communities and developing community projects.

The main project PPCDT is developing is the refurbishment of the former Pinwherry Primary School into a fit for purpose community facility.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The creation of a cosy space in the newly refurbished north end of the former school building, owned by Pinwherry and Pinmore Community Development Trust.

By providing a fully furnished and equipped, warm and welcoming cosy space within our village, we aim to tackle issues affecting our community, including social isolation, financial hardship, mental health and wellbeing issues.

WHAT DID THE PROJECT SET OUT TO ACHIEVE?

The project set out to increase community wellbeing and mental health, by providing a warm and welcoming space for the community to socialise and work from, in an otherwise very rurally isolated area. There are no other public spaces in Pinwherry and Pinmore – no shops, cafes, pubs, restaurants, libraries etc – so the new community space in the part-refurbished community-owned former school building is a lifeline to so many.



AT A GLANCE

CHALLENGES

- Timescale for work
- End of the financial year deadlines
- Volunteer capacity

BENEFITS

- Upskilling community members
- Reducing isolation and increasing social inclusion
- Environmental benefits



AMY-DEE WATSON

PPCDT Project Officer

"We are helping to tackle issues affecting our community, including social isolation, financial hardship, mental health and wellbeing issues"

Positive impacts can also be seen with regards to community empowerment. The community is now empowered to utilise their new space as they see fit, meeting the needs and wishes of residents from a grass-roots level.

HOW DID YOU FIND THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

The application form itself was straightforward as was the budget spreadsheet.

The multiple quotes and screenshots proved more of a challenge. The tight timeline was also a bit of a challenge for a completely volunteer-led organisation, in terms of the installation of the items and the commencement of the activities.

However, I think that was just situational with the end of the financial year as the ultimate project deadline.

WHO WILL THE PROJECT BENEFIT AND HOW?

The entire local community is benefiting from this project. Our new community building, now known as The Auld School Community Centre, is open and accessible to all.

We run weekly cosy space sessions, workspace Wednesdays and regular computer, mobile and tablet support drop-in sessions to help upskill community members who are struggling to use their devices.

Community groups use the space for their meetings and we have plans to run a variety of activities, for example craft workshops, social nights, fitness classes etc once the other end of the building is refurbished.

WHAT STAGE IS THE PROJECT AT NOW?

In terms of the ARIA funded element, that project is complete, as the furniture is in place and being used by the community.

In respect of the school redevelopment, phases one and two are complete and phase three is due to be carried out between September and March 2024.

After phase three, the entire building will be refurbished and open for the community to use.

WHAT BENEFITS HAVE YOU SEEN AS A RESULT OF THE PROJECT?

Many!

We are helping to tackle issues affecting our community, including social isolation, financial hardship, mental health and wellbeing issues.

A whole section of the community who have not been able (or willing) to participate in community activities, are now using the building. The accessibility is an instrumental factor, as well as being able to provide a comfortable, vibrant and inviting space.

There seems to be a renewed sense of enthusiasm and positivity, as community members are able to reconnect, make new connections and spend time together in an informal setting.

Our project has positive environmental impacts too with regards to energy use, as many people are congregating in one space. This negates the need to heat individual homes, which also helps to address the current cost of living crisis for residents.



WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED DURING THIS PROJECT AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?

Baring the short timescale to commence community activities using the funded furniture (which was achieved!), we encountered no challenges during this project.



FINALLY, WHAT ADVICE COULD YOU OFFER FOR ANYONE LOOKING TO TAKE ON A SIMILAR PROJECT?

Community ownership of any asset is a large undertaking and requires a lot of preparation, time and effort.

However, assuming the right team and supporting professionals and partner organisations are in place, it is certainly achievable and the long-term benefits for the community make all efforts worth it.

Community ownership of assets is fundamental to community wealth building and help to put the control back into the hands of the community themselves.

Our advice would be to ensure that the applicant organisation has the capacity to develop the project, most likely in the form of paid support, for example a Development Officer, and guidance from supporting third sector organisations.

FUNDING INFORMATION

'Community Led Local Development' or 'CLLD' gives local communities the power to tackle their own, local challenges.

By building knowledge and skills, supporting new ideas and encouraging cooperation, CLLD helps to create viable and resilient communities.

CLLD activity can support Community Wealth Building initiatives and opportunities to help enable Just Transition priorities.

£8.6 million has been allocated to [Local Action Groups](#) (LAG) to support CLLD within their areas through the Rural Community Led Fund (RCLF) in 2022-23.

Ayrshire LAG used their funding to establish the [Ayrshire Rural and Islands Ambition \(ARIA\) Fund](#)

You can find further information about current funding availability at the Scottish Rural Network Website including a free online [funding search tool](#) for your charity, community group or social enterprise.

From small grants to funding for big capital projects, we can help you track down the funding you need to make a difference in your community. The Scottish Rural Network is a one-stop-shop for news and information about rural development.

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