

GREENHILL BACKGROUND

The Green Hill Arts, Heritage and Youth Centre opened in December 2011 in the beautiful Victorian building that used to house part of the primary school in Fore Street, Moretonhampstead.

When the school moved to its new premises in 2006 there were discussions which led to Dartmoor National Park Authority making a clear statement that the building should remain in community use. Devon County Council made it part of a national pilot programme to transfer local authority assets to local communities, and agreed, not only to lease the building to Moretonhampstead Development Trust at a peppercorn rent, but to provide the funds to use one side of the old building as a permanent, purpose-built youth centre.

The Parish Appraisal (2007) asked residents what they would like to see the old building used for, and the responses were combined in a set of proposals for funding.



The Trust then devised a business plan which was presented to the community as part of a public appeal. The £15,000 raised by this was crucial in attracting further grants from the Dartmoor Sustainable Development Fund (for insulation), from the national Community Builders scheme, from the Regional Development Programme for England, and from the Heritage Lottery Fund, which enabled the conversion work to go ahead as planned under our project management. The £600,000 (inc VAT) scheme was designed by Moxley Macdonald architects and completed by Bovey Construction. It won the award for Best Community Building in 2013 by the Devon Building Control Partnership.

The Development Trust and Parish Council were keen to ensure that activities taking place in this building supported the community and did not impact negatively on any other community building or group in the parish. We wanted it to be an open-access, public space. The central area is an exhibition space for local artists and historical displays, with a Community Archive room run by the History Society, offices for small businesses, and studios to support local artists. The stunning foyer Heritage display was designed and supervised by Chris Reed, working with the Trust and the History Society, with advice from the Royal Albert Museum in Exeter.

The East wing of the building housed a brand new Youth Centre, over two floors equipped for purpose, with a kitchen/café area, toilets and a large office. The Trust sub-let this wing to Devon Youth Service until they withdrew from the building in 2014, when the Trust took over responsibility for running it alongside the rest of the building.

A huge amount of hard work by the Development Trust's staff and Trustees, and by a team of volunteers (especially the Arts Steering Group and Moretonhampstead History Society) has gone into the planning, fundraising, equipping and general problem-solving to get to where we are now. We think it is a great achievement.

We aimed for a major visitor attraction for Moretonhampstead, which has some great accommodation, pubs, cafes, shops and talented artists and craftspeople, but not enough to encourage tourists to stay for long in the town itself. It is of course a community building, with lots of potential for local use, but we also aimed for the project to pay for itself within three years. This we have achieved. The rents and fees paid by users, and purchases by customers, cover all the running costs and promise to keep the centre sustainable for many years to come.