



Bressay Development Ltd

SPELDIBURN COMMUNITY HUB

About Bressay



- ▶ Bressay is a small island, roughly 3 by 6 miles, opposite the town of Lerwick.
- ▶ Rich in heritage, wildlife, and a beautiful landscape which is good for walking or cycling.
- ▶ Approximately 340 residents in 186 households.



On-island facilities

Island facilities (other than Speldiburn) include:

- Shop/Post Office
- Community Hall
- Pub/hotel
- Heritage Centre
- Marina
- Playpark and football pitch
- Community Woodland
- Galley Shed

However, there is no longer a school, a once vital part of the community.



On-island facilities



2014: The school closure

- ▶ 3 classroom school, plus nursery.
- ▶ Following a statutory closure process, the school closed in 2014, by which time only 4 pupils remained.
- ▶ Unfortunately, the school role dropped at a time when the local council was looking to close a number of schools in Shetland.
- ▶ The school had also served as a venue for classes and other activities.
- ▶ The closure had a devastating effect on the island. It was part of a series of service withdrawals, including our community nurse.



SCOTTISH ministers will not call in Shetland Islands Council's decision last month to close the primary school on the isle of Bressay.

The council received a letter confirming the government accepted the closure of the small primary was received on Friday.

From The Shetland Times

2014: BCDA was formed

Bressay Community Development Association was set up at the start of the same year, after community consultation. The group's intention was to address major challenges faced by the residents of Bressay as a result of;

- ▶ Depopulation.
- ▶ Aging population.
- ▶ A lack of on-island services.
- ▶ Increasing ferry fare costs to the Shetland mainland.



2015: BDCA becomes BDL



Our Vision: To secure and sustain a vibrant future for Bressay in an active, connected, thriving and resilient community.

Objectives include;

- ▶ Promoting Bressay as a safe and accessible place to live
- ▶ Retaining and supporting the population
- ▶ Promoting infrastructure and affordable travel
- ▶ Supporting community spirit, the economy, jobs, housing and the environment
- ▶ Retaining on-island facilities, increasing community resilience
- ▶ Providing opportunities for learning

2015: Leasing the primary school

- ▶ BDL formerly leased the former primary School from the council.
- ▶ Using the existing facilities/layout of the school, the plan was to create a community hub with a café and business start up studios
- ▶ First year's rent was free from SIC, from then on it was to be £5k a year - we had no idea how we were going to pay that at the time, but we ploughed on anyway!



The School



Empty nursery



Classroom

The School becomes Speldiburn



Under 5's Group



Good As New Shop

The School



School kitchen and canteen areas

The School becomes Speldiburn



School kitchen and canteen becomes Speldiburn Cafe and gallery

The School



Classroom



General purpose room

The School becomes Speldiburn



Classroom becomes cafe overspill/craft sales/meeting and workshop room



General purpose room is now NHS room

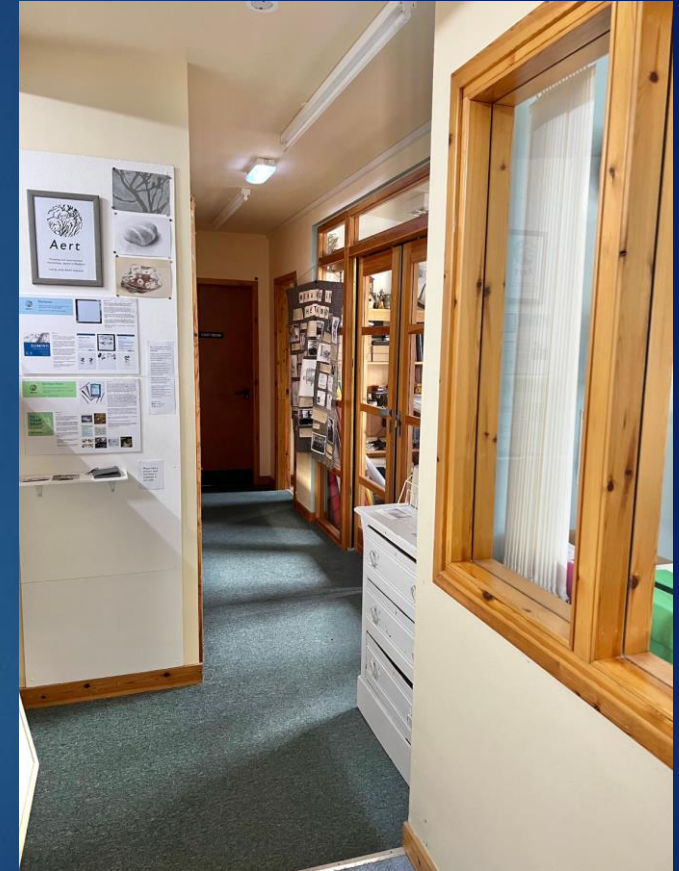
The School becomes Speldiburn



Office becomes
BDL/community office space



Other staff areas and the remaining classroom
become Artists' studios



Challenges at the time

- ▶ Due to a series of losses for Bressay, there was a general lack of positivity at the time, meaning some residents were sceptical of the project succeeding at first.
- ▶ BDL was a new organisation, meaning we were feeling our way and learning as we went. Some aspects took a longer time to start as a result.
- ▶ Finding out what services to have and when required a lot of research into need and demand as we went.
- ▶ It takes time to figure out what works best - for example people might say they want the cafe open on a Sunday, but then not use it.
- ▶ Staffing always an issue - although the cafe has grown into a steady business, we need to reduce hours in winter. As a small island so close to Lerwick, we are often competing for jobs with longer and non-seasonal hours.
- ▶ How do we fill the building? It seemed huge to begin with!

Setting up the building.

- ▶ Entirely volunteer led, and done on a shoestring.
- ▶ We accessed grants to set up cafe and office from SIC Economic Development, Awards for All and Bressay Community Council.
- ▶ Grants only paid for certain things - we had to be creative.
- ▶ This included 60% of cafe staff costs for first 3 months.
- ▶ Painting and organising the building was all done by volunteers. Costs were kept really low.
- ▶ Borrowed chairs /tables from the hall for larger events.



Getting going.

- ▶ Rooms kept as flexible as possible. Allows us to make the most of opportunities, and respond to changes in need (eg office space during pandemic). Ensures we're not too reliant on any one source of income.
- ▶ Projects - used volunteers we had with a clear skillset, combined with seeing a clear need.
- ▶ Cafe - we had catering experience and had tested 'pop-up' cafes in the hall.
- ▶ Funding availability lead us in certain directions. Environmental grants led us to do things that were otherwise unthinkable, but mean we are now more sustainable as well as more comfortable for visitors.



Early activities

- ▶ We ran events, like Bide Da Day in Bressa' Took part in 'Wool Week' (A Shetland wide event which attracts many visitors) and other events.
- ▶ Under 5s group moved into the nursery.
- ▶ Good As New Shop, with Climate Challenge 'Skills for Sustainability' Funding.
- ▶ Cafe was needed and successful, both summer tourist season and reduced winter service.
- ▶ Newsletter and Website. Communicating our activities and engaging with residents is essential.



2020: Pandemic and Lockdown

Although Speldiburn was closed to the public, we thought of lots of ways to keep supporting island residents. Highlights:

- ▶ Growing, art and activity packs for children.
- ▶ Extra editions of our island newsletter. Section of our website developed for online children's activities, and to advertise arts and crafts for sale.
- ▶ Continuation of Good As Shop with drop-off/pick service.
- ▶ Sharing of growing and garden photos between residents.
- ▶ Wellbeing Walks on the island.
- ▶ Development of Community Markets.



2020: Asset Transfer

- ▶ On 31st March BDL's solicitors paid £1 for the purchase of the School, playground, sheds and multicourt.
- ▶ Community Transfer Legislation ensures that The asset will continue to be used for community benefit.
- ▶ Lots of support from HIE and SIC's community Development Department.
- ▶ Ownership allows us to secure grants and take on larger refurb projects - we are looking at making the building more fit for purpose at the moment. It's allowed us to have funding for air source heating and solar panels.



Image: Malcolmson Architects.

More recent developments

- ▶ Local Crafts for sale
- ▶ Classes and workshops
- ▶ (Many!) Visits from tour groups
- ▶ UK's most northerly Park Run
- ▶ Wednesday Social Afternoon
- ▶ Woodland Group



Opportunities and challenges now

- ▶ Staffing and limited pool of volunteers - diminished after Covid.
- ▶ Looking for opportunities that can bring us a stable income in the longer term. We continue to run on limited funds.
- ▶ Now there is not enough space!
- ▶ NHS Clinic.
- ▶ Bressay Lighthouse - asked by Shetland Amenity Trust to look at whether this could be a community asset.
- ▶ Work with other Bressay community groups i.e. for growing projects.



Future Plans



- ▶ Fundraising and being sustainable! How to sustainably fund what we do is always key.
- ▶ Building refurbishment. Costings approx £2m for our everything on our ideal 'wishlist'. We're now looking at cheaper solutions to enhance the building, allowing us make the most of what's here without interrupting services
- ▶ Wellbeing Officer - we are running groups without a dedicated member of staff. We need someone who can liaise with the new NHS room and support the Under 5s. If we get this funding successfully recruit, it will transform this for us and allow more people to access the building, and allow us to do other pieces of work alongside Community Development.
- ▶ Community Development Plan - in process. A key activity in assessing current community buy-in and needs.

Lessons



- ▶ Make sure your organisation knows what its vision and aims are. This is the foundation for everything - what you choose to do, how you secure funding.
- ▶ There is lots of help (and funding) out there, from places like HIE (or whoever your local community enterprise organisation is), or from your council or local Voluntary Action Service - and from places like DTAS, SURF and more. You'll find it's a fairly tight knit community, who can refer you to the best people to help.
- ▶ Things can - and do - happen on a shoestring.
- ▶ Communication is important - keep your public informed, and keep inviting them.
- ▶ Start small and build on your successes. Don't be afraid to try things, and get things wrong.
- ▶ Experience comes as you go, you won't know everything before you start, and that's ok! People with a common vision make things happen.

